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ALBERT;

OR, THE

WILDS OF STRATHNAVERN.

VOL. II.

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OR, THE

WILDS OF STRATHNAVERN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

BY

ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF

LOUISA; OR, THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR,

&c. &c. &c.

Amid the roſes fierce repentance rears
Her ſnaky creſt: a quick returning pang
Shoots through the conſcious heart; where honour ſtill,
And great deſign, againſt the oppreſſive load
Of luxury, by fits impatient heave.

London:

PRINTED BY AND FOR

SAMPSON LOW, BERWICK STREET, SOHO.

1799.

B L 30.4.75.

ALBERT;

OR,

THE WILDS OF STRATHNAVERN.

CHAPTER I.

A CONFESSION AND A PEACE-OFFERING.

ALBERT, on his return, informed his uncle that he thought the eſtate delightfully ſituated, and very improveable, but wiſhed him to ride over the enſuing morning before he made any reſolutions reſpecting it.

"I ſha'n't do any ſuch thing, Sir. What do you think I wiſhed to ſeek you out

for, but to take all ſuch trouble off my hands? for, in faith, all is come out ſince you went. You, Sir, provoked the ſecret out of me, but Marian gained it I don't know how; the gipſy ſoftened my heart until ſhe might have wound me round her finger."

Albert and his ſiſter congratulated each other, while Mrs. Stanhope congratulated both.

"Well, I am glad to ſee you love one another," ſaid the Colonel: "and, heark'ye, Albert, ride over to-morrow and make this purchaſe, as our good friend, I underſtand, had rather decline it. Let me ſee how ſoon you can get it ready for my reception, for I ſhall expect to dine with you there in the courſe of a month."

"Dine with me, Sir?" ſaid Albert.

"Yes, Sir, dine with you. What a plague, ſhall you begrudge me a dinner? —Nay, never ſtare, man, that eſtate ſhall be yours. I'll make you independent, on purpoſe to ſee how you'll behave.

have. Beſide, to confeſs the truth, you are not ſo much obliged to me as you may think. I ſuſpected you plaguily of keeping a wench, and incurring a debt on her account; but Marian, through her friend's perſuaſion, has ſet me right, and this is but a peace-offering. To be ſure, I ſhall expect you in return to be plagued with me as much as I chooſe. No reply, Sir, it ſhall be as I ſay; and this good girl will be our houſekeeper until either ſhe or you get married."

Marian ſtole a look at Mrs. Stanhope that beſpoke regret, which ſhe returned with one of equal expreſſion, though ſoftened with a ſmile. Neither eſcaped Albert. "My dear Sir," ſaid he, "Mrs. Stanhope has honoured my ſiſter by being pleaſed with her company. Marian, under her protection, has not only been contented but happy. I am therefore convinced you will not on ſecond thoughts wiſh them to ſeparate."

"No, on my faith," returned the

Colonel warmly. "If Mrs. Stanhope wiſhes to retain her, well and good; ſhe was her friend when ſhe had no other, and we ought never to forget it. Beſides," added he, bowing to Mrs. Stanhope, "if you condeſcend to keep my niece, we ſhall have a good excuſe to intrude the more frequently."

"Not more frequently than welcome," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "I think I may venture to ſay; but though I confeſs I ſhall feel the loſs of Miſs Montgomery's company, yet it would be unjuſt to deprive you of her, whoſe claim is ſo much ſtronger."

"Can there be a ſtronger claim than gratitude?" anſwered Albert.

"Egad, I think not, Madam," replied the Colonel, "and am therefore reſolved to attach this fellow to me."

"My dear Sir," anſwered Albert, "deeds will more effectually ſpeak for me than words. I muſt therefore refer you to them; for I have not language to expreſs the feelings you give riſe to."

"Thou

"Thou haſt been a dutiful ſon and a good brother, and therefore I have little doubt thou wil't as worthily fulfil the other claims that may be made upon thee. For the preſent, we muſt, if poſſible, perſuade this Mrs. Moſely to manage for us: but I ſhall inſiſt, when once we are ſettled, that you look out for a wife. Our good friend here can perhaps aſſiſt your ſearch. I would take one of her recommendation againſt the world."

"Indeed," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "'tis an office of all others I would wiſh to decline. Mr. Montgomery's own heart will be the beſt and only director. I have too good an opinion of him to think he will ever fix it imprudently."

"There may be ſome juſtice in that," ſaid the Colonel, "but I hate your long tedious courtſhips. I'm ſixty-three, Madam, and life's uncertain. Beſides, you muſt allow it would be deviliſh ungrateful to let me ſlip out of the world without the ſatisfaction of ſeeing an heir,

particularly when I've ſet my mind on't."

"In that caſe," anſwered Mrs. Stanhope laughing, "I know not what to ſay; but your health appears good, Colonel, and your father lived to a great age; 'tis therefore probable you may do the ſame."

"Eighty-nine, Madam; but, even in that caſe, it would be very comfortable to ſee a great-nephew or two grow up as mettled dogs as their father. Oh, how I ſhould glory in them, if they fenced as well——"

Albert jogged his uncle's elbow.

"Zounds, be quiet," continued he aſide, "'tis only a ſlip: I'll mend it in a minute. Yes, Madam, the rogue fenced himſelf into my good opinion; we had a hard-fought battle—of words; but the dog parried all my hits, and at length diſarmed me, as you ſee."

Towards night the gentlemen offered to retire to an inn: but Mrs. Stanhope inſiſted to the contrary—not at all to the

the diſlike of Albert, and much to the ſatisfaction of the Colonel.

When Mrs. Stanhope found herſelf alone with Marian, before they retired to reſt, the occurrences of the day were revived with pleaſure; both however agreeing that the Colonel was bound to ſecrecy on ſome particular ſubject, and on which in all probability it would be in vain to queſtion Albert.

The fears of Marian reſted at once on Berners — a ſuppoſition in which Mrs. Stanhope could hardly acquieſce. "However," ſaid ſhe, "I will to-morrow morning careleſsly aſk your brother whether he has ſeen my nephew, or his abominable companion, ſince we left London. He will not tell a falſehood, and we may form our conjectures from his anſwers. If any thing has happened, it cannot be of a very ſerious nature, by the cheerfulneſs of both uncle and nephew."

This ſuppoſition was too rational for Marian not to accord with it, and the

converſation immediately turned on the letter which the Colonel had intruſted with Mrs. Stanhope. "It will," ſaid Marian, "be no breach of promiſe to my uncle, for he required none, to ſuffer me, my dear Madam, to be preſent at the peruſal, and would confer on me the higheſt gratification, though I ſhould not like to make the requeſt to him."

"Indeed," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope, "I rather ſuſpected that you would wiſh it, and for that very reaſon would have declined reading it. Come, exert yourſelf; let us baniſh the ſubject, and reſtore the letter unopened to the Colonel."

"No, Madam," anſwered Marian; "I muſt requeſt, nay entreat, you will peruſe it; it will make you ſomewhat acquainted with my excellent parent: but, if you think me unequal to the taſk, I will acquieſce, though I confeſs unwillingly."

"To refuſe you, my love," replied ſhe,

ſhe, "is painful, and to comply is equally ſo."

"Truſt me, Madam, this time," ſaid Marian, "and if I fail, you will know in future what reliance is to be placed on my word. I ſhall undoubtedly feel as a daughter; but I ſhall alſo feel, that the parent whom I lament is enjoying the recompenſe of her virtues—a reflection that ſhall dry my tears and ſooth my ſorrow."

"I will truſt you," anſwered Mrs. Stanhope, "but not to-night. We will both read it in the morning: the preſence of your uncle, whom we muſt meet at breakfaſt, will oblige us to recall our ſpirits, for it would be cruel to damp his pleaſure."

Marian ſubmitted to this arrangement with a ſigh, wiſhed her friend a good night, and retired to her chamber.

CHAPTER II.

A LETTER.

HOWEVER anxious Marian was to hear the adjuration that had made ſo deep an impreſſion on her uncle, yet ſhe did not intrude on Mrs. Stanhope until her uſual hour; when ſhe found her riſen and dreſſed, and, from ſome faint traces of tears that hung on her cheek, gueſſed how ſhe had been employed. "My dear girl," ſaid ſhe, "I am not unmindful of my word. Read the letter; I will retire while you peruſe it, but ſhall return in half an hour, when I expect to find *you* not unmindful of the promiſe you made me laſt night."

With

With theſe words, Mrs. Stanhope laid the letter and her watch on the table, tenderly ſaluted her, and left the room.

Marian, though ſhe had attained her wiſhes, for ſome moments remained irreſolute; but, ſinking on her knees, at length took the letter, preſſed it repeatedly to her lips, and with a trembling hand unfolded it, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"Confined to the gloomy ſolemnity of a death-bed, and haſtening towards that awful and diſpaſſionate hour when the vanities of life ſink as nothing before us, and pride flies like an empty ſhadow—after a ſilence of more than thirty years, your long-forgotten ſiſter calls on you—calls to awaken ſleeping nature in your heart, and demands it to fulfil thoſe duties that properly devolve on you.—Ah, Maurice! how came my deareſt friend your moſt abhorred enemy? or how is it poſſible you ſhould hate the tender guardian and beloved huſband

of your Marian?—Ah! that friend, that huſband, is no more:—in that country he finds peace, where the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the weary are at reſt.—Yes, I live to relate that he has preſſed before me to the grave; but again ſhall we be united, and ſoon the ſame kindly duſt cover both.—So far ſhall *we* then be ſafe—but while beaten about by the tempeſt of life, I, miſer-like, am anxious for my treaſure, and, no longer able to graſp it, would transfer it to thoſe to whom I was once dear.

"An uncorrupted youth and maid, with minds virtuous and untainted as their father's, and hearts ſuſceptible as their mother's, claim from your care the protection of an uncle, the ſoothing of a friend, and the affection of a parent.—Taught to depend on themſelves and to be ſatisfied with little, they need only the kind advice of riper years to direct their youth in the perplexing road they muſt neceſſarily paſs before they are ſufficiently acquainted with the world to be

be aware of its dangers.—Refuſe me not then—reject not my dying prayer, as your ſoul ſhall anſwer to mine in the great and tremendous day when all hearts ſhall be laid open!—Step forth—protect my children, and a bleſſing more powerful than mine will reſt upon you; the bleſſing promiſed to the protector of the orphan and fatherleſs.

"Ah, Maurice, could we meet once more—but that wiſh is vain—you would grant my requeſt, and accept the charge with pleaſure, as it would enable you to repay the long arrears of affection you owe me. To what, my brother, have you ſacrificed the happineſs of years? To family pride.—Has it requited you? has it repaid you for the many pleaſurable hours it has deprived you of?—Surely not. It has left your heart a void to a ſiſter, and to a brother, who, had you properly known him, would have been the firſt friend of your affection.

"To Sir James Montgomery I ſhall make

make no appeal. My Albert's children ſhall not ſtoop to ſo harſh and unfeeling a man;—though I have no doubt but that ſame family pride, which in the firſt inſtance made us foes, would in this ſtep forth with oſtentatious humanity to ſave them from being neceſſitated to act in any manner derogatory to his vanity. But they ſhall not gratify it by ſuch a ſubmiſſion. If all other means fail, the intereſt of the ſmall ſum they poſſeſs, and the humble ſeat of their parents, will afford them bread and an aſylum.—I have little more to add, than to pray that Heaven may continue its protection to you; for you have ſurely been uncommonly fortunate in eſcaping any ſerious caſualty, ſurrounded as you have been with all the hateful turmoils of war.—You have gained promotion, rank and fortune; but let not theſe make you regardleſs of the approaching hour which all muſt meet, when all ſhall vaniſh as a dream, and virtue alone afford us comfort.

"My

"My pen lingers on the paper. This is the laſt letter I ever ſhall trace; and the hand which writes it, will probably, before this meets your eye, be food for worms, or mouldering in the duſt.

"If ever any uneaſy thoughts ſhould ariſe in conſequence of the coldneſs that has ſubſiſted between us, I conjure you let this idea baniſh them.—I have been among the moſt bleſt of womankind, the only ſhade upon my happineſs, the diſpleaſure of my family:—riches and poverty kept from us at equal diſtance, we neither wiſhed the one nor feared the other; our affection increaſed with years; and, to complete all, in our children we had the ſatisfaction to contemplate, that the virtues we endeavoured to inculcate were not caſt on an ungrateful ſoil.

"Wearied and exhauſted—though the labour of many days—I muſt relinquiſh this taſk, I muſt bid my brother a laſt farewell.—My heart whiſpers me he will not be unmindful of my requeſt; a thought

a thought that ſmooths my paſſage to the grave.—Adieu, my Maurice! bleſſings attend you!—Guard my children, and the deed ſhall revert on your own head.

"Adieu, adieu!

Queen's-Row, Brompton. "MARIAN MONTGOMERY."

This letter was not peruſed by Marian without many breaks, and having frequent recourſe to her handkerchief, to clear the dimneſs that obſcured her ſight. At length her promiſe to Mrs. Stanhope occurred; and caſting her eyes on the watch, ſhe perceived that three quarters had elapſed ſince ſhe left her; when, ſtruggling with her ſorrow, ſhe folded the letter, roſe from her knees, and wiped off the intruding tears, exclaiming—"Ah, how true is the word of the pſalmiſt, that Heaven is never regardleſs to the prayer of the righteous, nor doth the reward of their virtues ever fail to be tranſmitted to their children!"—Another quarter of an hour elapſed before

before Mrs. Stanhope joined her; when ſhe found her calm, reſigned, and ready to accompany her to breakfaſt. "My dear madam," ſaid ſhe, preſſing the letter to her lips before ſhe returned it, "how ſhall I expreſs my thanks for your thus gratifying my curioſity? I will candidly confeſs it has coſt me ſome tears; but they are not painful, for they are ſuch as ſoften the heart and amend it."

"I rejoice to find your behaviour in this caſe even ſuperior to my expectation," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope; "in future I ſhall in no caſe fear to truſt you."

Thus ſpeaking, ſhe led the way to the breakfaſt room, where they found the Colonel and Albert waiting their appearance.

CHAPTER III.

CHARITABLE OPINIONS—A PURCHASE.

THE compliments of the morning paſt, and breakfaſt nearly finiſhed, Mrs. Stanhope, addreſſing Albert, ſaid, "Mr. Montgomery, have you ſeen either my nephew or Berners ſince we left London? On Frederic's account I am ſincerely uneaſy, as his youth, and unhappy predilection for that bad man, will, I fear, draw him into many ſerious calamities."

The Colonel chuckled, as he had no doubt the reſtraint laid on him muſt now inevitably be removed.

"I ſaw

"I ſaw both, Madam, by chance at a coffee-houſe," anſwered Albert, "a few days before I left town; they were then apparently well."

"My nephew, I hope, is ſenſible of his error?"

"I hope he is. I am convinced he is rather miſled than naturally inclined to evil. Pardon me, Madam, for preſuming to adviſe—ſome tempers are impatient of controul—your gentle interference might perhaps ſhew him his danger, and ſnatch him from the pernicious ſway that Berners apparently has over him, and which you can ſcarcely wonder at, when you reflect, that early impreſſions are not eaſily ſhaken off, and that the power of a beloved preceptor has ſcarcely leſs influence over the mind than that of a parent."

"There is not ſuch a fellow in the world, egad, there is not," exclaimed the Colonel involuntarily.

"I know not what meaſures to adopt,"

returned

returned Mrs. Stanhope without appearing to notice the Colonel's exclamation —"I grieve to leave him in his errors, yet almoſt fear he is incorrigible."

"Pardon me, Madam, for differing in that reſpect from you," ſaid Marian: "Mr. St. Auſtyn has no appearance of libertiniſm in his general manner; and had he not been aſhamed of his conduct, he never would have made the offer by a ſecond perſon. That odious man no doubt planned the whole; for Mr. St. Auſtyn never could aſk *him* to execute ſuch a commiſſion."

"Your opinion is, however, charitable," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope. "But, to baniſh an ungrateful ſubject, 'tis a fine morning, Colonel, what ſay you to a ride over to Blackwood?"

The Colonel acquieſced, and the coach was ordered, in which Mrs. Stanhope and Marian, with the gentlemen, ſoon reached the intended purchaſe; which entirely meeting the Colonel's approbation,

probation, an agreement was made previous to the ſale, and drafts given for the money.

All were now buſied in arrangements for ſettling the Colonel and his nephew in their new habitation; which was completed within the Colonel's given time of one month.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

SOLILOQUY——CONVERSATION——IMPRUDENCE—AND A WEAK ENDEAVOUR TO ACT UPRIGHTLY.

MRS. St. Auſtyn appeared ſomewhat recovered after being a month in the country; but Frederic, in a great meaſure left to his own reflections, and ſhrinking from the ſcrutiny, determined at that period to return to London. Gertrude too was by no means at eaſe. Some time before, Berners' abſence was the only thing that diſturbed her (or at leaſt that ſhe fancied diſturbed her); but now ſhe was in reality uneaſy—not only on her mother's account, but on her

her own. The promiſe given to Berners hung on her ſpirits; for, though it was nothing more than what a thouſand beautiful *perſecuted* damſels had done before, yet it was inconſiſtent with that ſpirit of rectitude which nature had implanted in her breaſt; and the idea of concealment from her neareſt friends appeared a mark of ingratitude from which her heart recoiled. "Yet," ſaid ſhe, as ſhe reflected on the ſubject, "why ſhould I be uneaſy? Have I not long preferred Berners to every other man in the world, and, if I do not marry him, am reſolved never to marry any one? Then why ſhould the promiſe vex me? Berners, I am convinced, loves me, and the many years I have known him may ſurely excuſe my having ſo much confidence in him. Yet," continued ſhe after a pauſe, "has not my mother alſo loved me? How many years duty are due to her! and yet I have taken a ſtep of ſuch conſequence without conſulting her. Ah! ſhould I ever

ever have a daughter, how ſhould I deſpiſe her if ſhe were capable of ſuch duplicity! I dare not reflect on the ſubject. Let what will be the conſequence, I will diſcloſe all to Frederic. He, I am ſure, reſpects Berners, and will adviſe me for the beſt."

Thus reſolved, the firſt time ſhe found herſelf alone with her brother, ſhe prefaced the ſubject by expreſſing her ſurpriſe that Berners had not accompanied him into the country. Frederic readily replied, that his friend had complained of the coldneſs with which Mrs. St. Auſtyn had behaved, and on that account declined it.—"Indeed," replied Gertrude, "my mother did not treat him quite ſo kindly as uſual; but he ſhould conſider that her health was at that time very indifferent; and if he had not even choſen to come here, he might have been at his father's."

"True," anſwered Frederic; "but I fancy the country has no charms equal to thoſe he meets in London. Berners

is

is naturally gay, and the ſameneſs of domeſtic life is not calculated to pleaſe him."

Gertrude felt an uneaſy qualm about her heart; but aſſuming all her courage ſhe ſaid, "Perhaps he may have formed ſome attachment in London. I think I heard a vague account of his being in love with Miſs Montgomery, and that in conſequence Mrs. Stanhope had taken a diſlike to him."

Frederic in his turn felt confuſed; but ſomewhat relieved by finding that the real caſe was unknown, he replied, "I believe you could ſcarcely have fixed upon a woman he loves ſo little, though he acknowledges her handſome and accompliſhed. Indeed, I believe he is rather a general lover than a particular one."

"Surely you judge wrong. He appears to poſſeſs too much ſenſibility to be a general lover."

Frederic laughed. "My dear Ger-

trude, that romantic diſpoſition thou haſt imbibed will be perpetually leading thee into errors. Berners is the man for whom I have the moſt affection: but I hope he will never marry; for I do not think he would be happy in that ſtate himſelf, or make a deſerving woman ſo."

Gertrude, however wounded by this ſpeech, rejoiced that ſhe had not diſcloſed her ſecret, and reſolved to conceal it more carefully than before. "I think," ſaid ſhe after a ſhort pauſe, "you made an offer of aſſiſtance to the Montgomeries?—at leaſt, if they did not chooſe to accept it, their behaviour was unpardonable."

Frederic was now convinced that his ſiſter had heard an erroneous account of the affair; yet fearful of ſaying any thing that might render an explanation neceſſary, he anſwered, "It was a fooliſh buſineſs, and originated in error on both ſides. I miſtook their character,

and

and they miſunderſtood my real intentions; I could therefore wiſh it forgotten."

"Mr. Berners, I am ſure," anſwered Gertrude, "can never forget it; Mr. Montgomery's behaviour to him was beyond every thing derogatory."

"As Berners knew there was a miſunderſtanding, it had been better could he have ſufficiently maſtered his temper to let him paſs unnoticed," returned Frederic.

"Doubtleſs it might: but Mr. Berners is high-ſpirited; and for haughtineſs, I never ſaw Montgomery's equal—at leaſt to judge from his manner that morning in the Park. If he is ſo inſufferably proud in adverſity, what would he be in proſperity?"

"Moſt probably the contrary," returned Frederic. "He is my greateſt enemy; yet I muſt do him the juſtice to declare, that I believe him a noble generous fellow."

This anſwer aſtoniſhed Gertrude,

who, perplexed in conjecture, wiſhed for further information; but Frederic, reſolved on the contrary, abruptly left her.

"Why," ſaid he when alone, "am I forced to eſteem the people that hate and deſpiſe me? By Gertrude's vague conjectures, it is plain this unhappy buſineſs has never been explained either to my mother or her. Generous Marian! to Mrs. Stanhope I have no doubt ſhe was forced, from Berners' conduct, to declare all; but how truly delicate not to expoſe me to my ſiſter! and how equally generous of my aunt not to leſſen me in my mother's opinion!—Ah! perhaps it is not yet too late to regain their eſteem. But to give up Berners, who has ſuffered ſo ſeverely, and entirely through his miſtaken friendſhip for me, is impoſſible, and every effort without that I know would be unavailing."

A month, as before ſaid, had elapſed, when Frederic, tired with the country, and yet more ſo with himſelf, determined

mined to return to town, which Berners' letters had never failed to preſs. Mrs. St. Auſtyn was alſo better; and now within ſix months of being of age, he conſidered himſelf as competent to act as he pleaſed as if he had been really ſo.

Frederic had not been in London many days before he was convinced that Berners had ſome female purſuit that he had not confided to him, and with a little attention diſcovered, that his landlady's daughter, Betſey Southern, had been unfortunate enough to pleaſe him. He had ſpoken warmly of her the firſt time he ſaw her, but that Frederic had placed to the uſual effervescence of his manner; but now, whenever the parties met, which was not unfrequent, as Betſey was entirely at home, attention on the ſide of Berners, and bluſhes on that of the young woman, ſoon revealed the truth.

"I wiſh," ſaid Frederic half jeſtingly, "that girl had not returned while we were here."

"Pſhaw! you are grown the mereſt

cynic, a very dog in a manger! Is ſhe not a charming creature, and formed to be beloved?"

"Indeed," anſwered Frederic, "though I did not obſerve her the day her mother was ill, yet now I muſt confeſs ſhe appears the picture of innocence and beauty."

"Oh!" exclaimed Berners, "'tis the prettieſt ſimpleton nature ever formed; ſo mild, ſo unaſſuming, ſo ready to believe—in ſhort, ſo much to my taſte, that I never loved a girl ſo well in my life."

"You intend to marry her, then?" ſaid Frederic.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Berners. "To be ſure, I have been obliged to ſay ſomething of that kind to quiet her fears, and gain time; but what think you was my anſwer? Marian thought herſelf under no obligation for ſuch an offer; nay, if ſhe had accepted it, ſhe would have made you feel ſhe was doing you a favour. Such haughty minxes ought

ought to be humbled. But to ſhew you the difference, this ſweet girl almoſt thanked me, and replied timidly, that ſhe was not worthy to be the wife of ſuch a gentleman; but that if ſhe were raiſed as I had condeſcended to mention, ſhe hoped ſhe ſhould never forget her origin, nor the conduct neceſſary to make it overlooked by others."

"On my ſoul," exclaimed Frederic, "you have a heart of ſtone if you ſeduce this girl!"

"I ſhould have one of adamant if I did not endeavour to vanquiſh her prejudices, and make her happy," replied Berners.

"Perhaps your mode of happineſs may not fall in with her idea."

"Never doubt it," returned Berners. "I ſhall find a docile ſcholar, I warrant you; for ſhe has already ſet aſide paternal duty, and liſtened to me in ſecret; and I have ſomewhere read, that one falſe ſtep as naturally begets another as a father does a ſon. Our firſt interviews

were procured with ſome difficulty, for I watched her out and purſued her; but the two laſt have been by her own conſent, and our meeting-place the Park; for the old woman is as watchful as a lynx; it is impoſſible to converſe with her at home."

After Berners' departure, Frederic could not avoid ruminating on the ſubject; and, the upright part of his character for a while predominant, he determined if poſſible to ſave the imprudent girl from the ruin that awaited her.

In the courſe of the enſuing morning, as he was walking with Berners, a ſmall ready-furniſhed houſe in a pleaſant ſituation attracted their attention; and Frederic, anxious to remove Berners from Knightſbridge, immediately propoſed hiring it. Berners, however attached to Betſey, made no objection; for, the new habitation being more centrically ſituated for pleaſure, he could not withſtand the temptation; or perhaps conſidered, that, as ſhe had before met him ſecretly,

ſecretly, he could in future but have recourſe to the ſame means.

The morning before Frederic left Knightſbridge, calling in the parlour to diſcharge his lodging, Berners being not yet riſen, he found Mrs. Southern and her daughter alone. On bidding them farewell, he reſpectfully ſaluted Betſey, ſaying, in a manner ſufficiently ſtrong to be underſtood by the young lady, "I take this liberty, Miſs Southern, in the preſence of your mother; and permit me to add, that when you meet with a man happy enough to gain your heart, and your mother's approbation, I ſhall think myſelf honoured by preſenting your hand to him at the altar. That you may not forget this requeſt, I entreat you to accept this trifle as a memorial." So ſaying he preſented her a ring of ſome value, and, withdrawing from the mother's thanks, haſtened up ſtairs, called Berners, and, entering a coach, they ſoon arrived at their new habitation.

Frederic's ſpirits yet continued depreſſed; but convinced that there was an inſuperable bar between himſelf and Marian, he determined to drive her from his heart and memory, and therefore plunged into all Berners' diſſipation. He played deep, without any real inclination to gaming, and, as he was no adept, always with loſs. He alſo kept a miſtreſs, whoſe name was faſhionable in the annals of gallantry; but though handſome and univerſally followed, ſhe frequently inſpired him with diſguſt, when recollection forced him to compare her free and looſe behaviour with the frank yet chaſte manners of Marian.—To complete all, he would have drank, for wine appeared to him the moſt powerful ſoporific; but conſtitution in that caſe was at enmity with inclination, for exceſs of wine diſordered and deranged him ſo greatly, for ſome days after, that it only afforded more leiſure for painful remembrances. Amidſt all, he was not unmindful of

one

one object. The ſkill of Albert in the uſe of arms touched him nearly; and determined in future not to be outdone in the noble art of *man-killing*, he daily practiſed at a mark, and alſo engaged a ſkilful fencing maſter to inſtruct him in that ſcience.

In this ſtate was the infatuated Frederic, erring againſt his better judgement, and daily approaching nearer the gulph which muſt finally overwhelm him, when he arrived at the age of twenty-one. His debts, together with the money he had raiſed, he found ſerious drawbacks on his eſtate; but he was now a profeſſed man of pleaſure, and had not time for ſuch paltry conſiderations. Marian too, though ſometimes ſhe coſt him a ſigh, was leſs remembered than formerly; for, his company ſought by the diſſipated among the men, and his perſon admired and careſſed by the imprudent among the females, he became more reconciled to himſelf, and almoſt wondered how it was poſſible *ſhe* could withſtand him.

CHAPTER V.

A RESPECTABLE EXIT.

IN the mean while the time paſſed more pleaſantly as well as reſpectably at Blackwood. The Colonel, though petulant, poſſeſſed an excellent heart, and, anxious to pay to the children the debt of affection he owed the parents, was daily giving them freſh proofs of his eſteem. To Mrs. Moſely Marian had written in her uncle's name, offering her any ſum that might be neceſſary to aſſiſt her in buſineſs, or, if ſhe approved it better, a comfortable aſylum at Blackwood; the latter of which ſhe had choſen, entreating time only to ſettle her ſiſter in the buſineſs their kindneſs enabled her to decline.

One

One afternoon as Mrs. Stanhope and Marian were preparing to accompany Albert to Black-wood, the arrival of the following letter, expreſs, gave a damp to their pleaſure, and determined Mrs. Stanhope upon a longer journey.

" MADAM,

" By order of my miſtreſs, I take the liberty to requeſt you to favour her with your preſence as ſpeedily as poſſible. She has never been well ſince ſhe came from London, though ſhe would not ſuffer Miſs St. Auſtyn to inform you of it, leſt, as ſhe ſays, it ſhould alarm you; but to-day the breaking of a blood-veſſel has not only given us, but herſelf, the moſt ſerious apprehenſions, and her greateſt anxiety appears to be to ſee you. Miſs St. Auſtyn never leaves her a moment, and indeed is almoſt incapable of writing, or would not have intruſted the taſk to, Madam,

" Your obedient humble ſervant,

" SUSANNAH ROCHE.

" P.S.

"P. S. This ſame expreſs has letters for Mr. St. Auſtyn."

"I dreaded this event," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope when ſhe read the above to her friends; "my ſiſter's health was always delicate, and, accuſtomed to the regularity of a country life, it has been unable to bear the town air, added to late hours and fatigue. I ſhall ſet off immediately. Heaven ſend I may be of any ſervice! You, my dear, (turning to Marian,) ſhall remain with your brother and uncle, as the journey muſt be far from agreeable."

"If I can be of any ſervice, Madam," returned Marian, "command me. If the journey be unpleaſant, a companion will be the more neceſſary."

Mrs. Stanhope declined this offer; ſhe wiſhed to ſpare her ſiſter the mortification of meeting one whom ſhe had unmeritedly inſulted, and which muſt inevitably have been the caſe when ſhe found her family and connections equal to her own.

Mrs. Stanhope travelled with the utmoſt ſpeed; and though ſhe had the ſatisfaction to find her ſiſter living, yet not a gleam of hope remained of her recovery. For the firſt time for many years her heart appeared ſenſible of ſiſterly affection, and, as Mrs. Stanhope tenderly embraced her, ſhe ſaid faintly, "Alas! I remember all my errors towards you, but ſhall not live to make atonement for them. Be a friend to my poor Gertrude: I have left her in your power, and ſhall die content if you accept the charge."

"Would I could accept it on a leſs melancholy occaſion, my dear ſiſter!" anſwered Mrs. Stanhope; "but reſt aſſured, ſhould there be a neceſſity for it, that I will not only regard Gertrude as a ſacred truſt, but alſo as my own child."—A faint ſmile enlivened Mrs. St. Auſtyn's features, and after a ſhort pauſe ſhe added: "I ſhall not enjoy the ſatisfaction of ſeeing my ſon."

"Where

"Where is Frederic then?" anſwered Mrs. Stanhope, haſtily turning to Gertrude, who was weeping by her mother's ſide: "is it poſſible that he is not yet arrived?"

"The expreſs returned laſt night," ſaid Gertrude. "Unfortunately my brother was not in town, nor is he expected for a fortnight. His orders to his ſervants were, to keep all letters carefully till his return, unleſs he ſent for them. Did he know my mother's ſituation, I am convinced he would fly to her."

Mrs. Stanhope made no reply, but beſtowed all her cares on her dying ſiſter. But neither tenderneſs nor attention was availing, for on the following morning ſhe expired.

The firſt ſhock ſomewhat recovered, Mrs. Stanhope gave every neceſſary order, and, cauſing Mrs. St. Auſtyn's will to be read, leſt there ſhould be any particular charge, found it merely concerned

Gertrude,

Gertrude, who was left to her guardianſhip with a fortune of ſixteen thouſand pounds, if ſhe married with her aunt's concurrence, but otherwiſe it was left at her diſcretion.

The funeral over, Mrs. Stanhope truly judged, that remaining on the ſpot where Gertrude had experienced ſo ſevere a loſs could but increaſe her grief; therefore, cauſing all to be prepared, they left the manſion-houſe the morning after the interment, and nine days from her arrival.

In the mean while Mr. St. Auſtyn's ſervant, aware of the neceſſity of his maſter's being appriſed of his mother's danger, ſpared no pains to diſcover where his engagement lay, and at length learned he was with a party at Newmarket, where he immediately joined him.

Frederic, on peruſing the letter that informed him of her danger, for a moment remained ſilent; then turning to the ſervant he ſaid, "Uſe all poſſible haſte

haſte in procuring poſt-horſes, I wiſh not to delay a moment."

"By heavens," ſaid Berners, who was alone with him when the ſervant left the room, "fortune is ſurely diſpoſed to recompenſe you for her former frowns! for, ſhould Mrs. St. Auſtyn's jointure fall in, it will be a good acquiſition to the eſtate."

"Periſh ſo ſelfiſh a thought!" replied Frederic warmly: "I could wiſh you, Berners, to remember that Mrs. St. Auſtyn is my mother, and I candidly confeſs that I take ſhame to myſelf when I conſider my errors towards her."

"On my life, an admirable ſpeech for a pupil of Montgomery!" replied Berners; "but for one of mine it will never do. Nature before diſſimulation has ever been my maxim."

"Diſſimulation, Sir?" repeated Frederic.

"Pſhaw! what ſignifies the mere word? I am vexed to ſee you grieved in ſuch a cauſe. How is it poſſible you can

can care for a woman who has given ſuch repeated proofs that ſelf-gratification was her higheſt enjoyment?—Obligation and affection beget eſteem, but you owe neither to her."

"Yes," anſwered Frederic; "the care of my infancy, and the inſuperable obligation that a ſon owes to a mother."

"Inſuperable obligation!" repeated Berners laughing—"I proteſt I cannot diſcover it. Pray, did ſhe bring you into the world ſolely for your own advantage? or was you ſummoned as an unthought of, an unconcerned being?—But keep to your preſent frame of mind, and I predict you will die a parſon."

"I hope, however I live, that I ſhall not die a ſcoundrel," anſwered Frederic with petulance.

Berners replied with equal heat; but in his paſſion happening to touch on the ſorrow he experienced from the weight of his obligations, Frederic's heart melted at once, and a reconciliation took place; a few

a few minutes after which the chaiſe being ready, they departed.

Frederic's ſpirits appeared too much oppreſſed for Berners to hazard another quarrel, and the journey during two whole nights and one day was performed without much converſation on either ſide.—Berners could not avoid congratulating himſelf on the ſtep he had taken in reſpect to Gertrude, while Frederic was undergoing a ſcrutiny from his own conſcience, which he could neither ſtifle nor ſilence. At length they reached the manor-houſe; all was dreary and ſilent, and Frederic's fears already whiſpered he was too late. The porter opened the gate. "How is my mother?" exclaimed he, regardleſs of his being in mourning.—The old man hung down his head in ſilence, and without uttering a word the queſtion was anſwered. "Where is my ſiſter?" continued he, leaping from the chaiſe; "let her know I am here; would to heaven I had been ſooner!"

"Miſs

"Miſs St. Auſtyn, Sir," anſwered the porter, "is gone with Mrs. Stanhope; they left the houſe not more than four hours ago. The expreſſes ſurely have miſcarried, for two have been ſent to London with the news of my miſtreſs's death."

"I was not in London," replied he, ruſhing into the houſe, and running wildly from room to room, at leaſt expecting to find his mother's corſe. But every thing was in its uſual ſtate of order, no veſtiges of death or funeral pomp were to be ſeen. At length, throwing himſelf on a ſofa, he wept bitterly. Somewhat recovered by tears, and gratified that he could indulge his propenſity without ridicule, (for Berners had left him when he entered the houſe,) he ſent for the old butler, and, after queſtioning him when his mother died, demanded an account of all that had paſſed.

"Why, an' pleaſe your honour, both Mrs. Stanhope and you were ſent to as ſoon as we apprehended danger.

danger. She came directly, but your honour was——"

"Where honour had no buſineſs—But go on as conciſely as poſſible. When did Mrs. Stanhope come? who was with her? and what did ſhe ſay on finding me abſent?"

"She came, your honour, the evening before my miſtreſs died. Poor lady! ſhe was fatigued almoſt to death with travelling poſt, yet ſhe would not leave her all night."

"She, at leaſt, has the ſatisfaction of knowing ſhe did her duty. But proceed; what did ſhe ſay reſpecting me?"

"Nothing, your honour, before the ladies, as my miſtreſs's maid Roche told us: but ſhe ſoon after came down, and ſent off her own man to London to endeavour to find you; but he returned and ſaid——"

"I care not what *he* ſaid, I was not to be found. But go on, my friend, I am ſorry to be ſo haſty—I aſked before who was with Mrs. Stanhope?"

"Nobody, pleaſe your honour, but old John and Thomas, and the young woman that is lately come to live with her."

"Well, well—ſhe here too?—A curſe attend the projectors of that infernal jaunt, that kept me away at ſuch a time!—But how were Mrs. Stanhope and my ſiſter at their departure? Miſs Montgomery, I am convinced, would ſpare no attention to comfort them."

"Who, Sir?" ſaid the man ſtaring.

"Who?—Why, the lady that came with Mrs. Stanhope—a young handſome lady—Miſs Montgomery."

"Lauk, Sir, I did not know her ſurname. To be ſure, Mrs. Jenny is a very ſmart young woman, and if it was not for the caſt in her eye, and her being pock-fretten——"

Frederic had no longer patience. "Fool! idiot!" exclaimed he, "and have you been ſo long keeping me in ſuſpenſe about a paltry wench whom I never ſaw?"

"Merciful goodneſs! how paſſionate your

your honour is with your old ſervant!—How ſhould I know whom you expected?"

"True, true, good Jonathan! I am indeed ſtrangely altered. Would I had died in lieu of my mother!"

"God forbid! Your honour will, I hope, live to ſee many happy days. You muſt not give way to grief. You have not yet aſked reſpecting my miſtreſs's will."

"I have not yet thought on the ſubject," replied Frederic. "If ſhe has taken care of Gertrude, I am ſatisfied—I was amply provided for."

"Your honour's, to be ſure, is a good eſtate, and Miſs Gertrude's fortune is very handſome. Sixteen thouſand pounds may match ſuch a lady to one of the beſt men in the kingdom."

"Heaven ſend ſo large a ſum does not rather make her a mark for ſome of the worſt to aim at!"

"Pretty ſafe, your honour, for that. Mrs. Stanhope is left her guardian, and that

that fortune in caſe ſhe marries with her approbation; if otherwiſe, it is left to *her* diſcretion."

"Is it poſſible that my mother made ſo excellent a reſtriction? Mrs. Stanhope, I am convinced, will never refuſe her conſent to a deſerving object, however ſmall his fortune, and her approbation being neceſſary will keep off the worthleſs."

Frederic, after ſome further converſation, deſired Jonathan to have all the bills collected in the courſe of a day or two, as he would then diſcharge them. "Bleſs your honour, 'tis all done. Mrs. Stanhope was up this morning at ſix, and paid every ſhilling. I took the liberty of an old ſervant to ſay your honour would be here ſoon, and ſhe need not trouble herſelf; but ſhe anſwered, it was all the ſame, it could be ſettled between you. She gave every ſervant in the houſe ten guineas to buy mourning, and black coats and gowns to every

aged perſon in the village who had not above ten pounds yearly."

"Leave me, good Jonathan, I ſhall be more myſelf preſently; I will try to compoſe my ſpirits."

Jonathan bowed, and left him.

"So!" ſaid Frederic dejectedly:—"this laſt circumſtance has completed all. Well do I know Mrs. Stanhope's diſpoſition, and perfectly underſtand how I ſtand in her eſteem by this ſettlement. I neglected my mother living, and ſhe is reſolved that her poor remains ſhall not accept any thing from ſuch a ſon. Nothing now can ever reinſtate me in her opinion. And can I wonder? It is not impoſſible but that ſhe have learned where I have been, and that while the parent that gave me birth was languiſhing in the agonies of death, I was expending my eſtate in riot, with gameſters whom I deſpiſed, and women who inſpired me with diſguſt."

Berners, who had only left St. Auſtyn

until he ſuppoſed the firſt guſt of ſorrow would be evaporated, now entered; and as he was particularly careful in his expreſſions, Frederic felt relieved by his ſociety. Converſing on the death of his mother, Berners, who with the utmoſt difficulty had ſo long reſtrained his curioſity, at length aſked, whether ſhe had made a will, and ſettled Miſs St. Auſtyn's fortune.

"She has acted reſpecting Gertrude," replied Frederic, "juſt as I could wiſh; *ſhe* at leaſt never failed in her duty to her: ſhe has left her ſixteen thouſand pounds."

"Sixteen thouſand pounds!" anſwered Berners, almoſt thrown off his guard by the agreeable ſurpriſe the ſound occaſioned — "Sixteen thouſand pounds did you ſay?—How I rejoice the amiable Miſs St. Auſtyn will be independent! She doubtleſs will not remain long with your aunt, to be perhaps accounted ſecondary to Montgomery's ſiſter."

"Gertrude, I am convinced, will

never be ſecondary to any one in her aunt's eſteem, unleſs it be her own fault. —But I forgot to tell you of a clauſe in my mother's will, that has aſtoniſhed me, as it infers more reflection than ſhe uſually ſhewed."

Berners' ſpirits felt ſomewhat lowered; he feared he knew not what: but aſſuming a careleſs air, and turning towards the window, he aſked what the clauſe might be.

"It is," returned Frederic, "that Mrs. Stanhope's conſent is neceſſary to her marriage; without which ſhe forfeits all but what depends on her generoſity, or rather prudence, to give."

It was fortunate that Berners had turned his face from St. Auſtyn—or, adept as he was, his features muſt have betrayed him. Gnaſhing his teeth with vexation and diſappointment, he inwardly muttered a curſe, and remained ſilent.

"You do not ſpeak," continued Frederic: "do you not think it a prudent reſtriction?

reſtriction? Gertrude's education has been erroneous and romantic, and might have rendered her an eaſy prey to a deſigning villain."

Berners turned haſtily round; he almoſt ſuppoſed that his deſign was diſcovered, and that Frederic had taken this method to let him know it. St. Auſtyn's features were however too calm for his ſuſpicions to continue, and overcoming his emotion he replied, "Prudent reſtriction do you call it? I think it unjuſt, tyrannical and unpardonable. Is that the reward for her attention? to render her dependent on the caprice of a woman whom living ſhe herſelf could not endure, and who in all probability will throw her away on her favourite Albert?"

"Indeed," anſwered St. Auſtyn, "your diſlike to that family makes you unjuſt. Mrs. Stanhope's prudence or generoſity was never, I believe, called in queſtion. My mother, I readily agree, feared her: but the reaſon was obvious; ſhe was a rigid cenſor of her little

foibles; but this laſt calm and diſpaſſionate act plainly evinces how high an opinion ſhe had of her prudence."

Berners ventured no reply; he felt to reſtrain his temper would be impoſſible, and therefore changed the ſubject, by ſaying he would in the courſe of the evening call at the Rectory to ſee his father, if Frederic would accompany him.

St. Auſtyn declined the invitation, and after Berners' departure wrote to Gertrude, to whom he expreſſed the ſorrow and anxiety he had experienced at being abſent at ſo awful a moment. He then ſpoke in the higheſt terms of his ſatisfaction reſpecting the arrangement concerning herſelf, adding that, when his ſpirits would ſupport a ſcrutiny, whatever jewels or trinkets appertained to his mother he would remit to her; concluding by deſiring her to entreat Mrs. Stanhope to draw on his banker for the ſums ſhe had diſburſed, as he would prepare him to anſwer them by the firſt poſt.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCEALMENT PAINFUL TO A GRATEFUL MIND.

MRS. Stanhope and Gertrude came immediately to London, as the former determined to ſettle every thing relative to her niece before ſhe returned home; and finding the houſe ſhe had before occupied free, ſhe engaged it for a month.

Mrs. Stanhope had always treated her niece with affection; but her behaviour now was ſoftened into a tenderneſs ſuch as Gertrude had never before experienced; for, though doubtleſs Mrs. St. Auſtyn had loved her equally, yet her temper was naturally

petulant, and her treatment of Gertrude rather as a *child* than a friend and companion. It has been before obſerved, that Mrs. St. Auſtyn was avaricious; her daughter's pocket-money conſequently had not been ample; and when Mrs. Stanhope informed her that ſhe ſhould pay her one hundred pounds per quarter, ſhe could not help exclaiming, "What, my dear Madam, ſhall I do with ſo much money? Indeed it is a great deal more than I can poſſibly expend."

"I think not," returned Mrs. Stanhope ſmiling, "when I inform you what I expect you to do with it. In the firſt place, you ſhall purchaſe your clothes, as by that means you will exerciſe your own taſte; in the ſecond, you muſt pay your own ſervant, as that ſtep will give you a more decided authority over her than if ſhe received her money from a third perſon.—— Theſe neceſſary articles fulfilled, I have no doubt you will find a uſe for the remainder;

remainder; which if you cannot diſpoſe of otherwiſe, give it to the needy. Your fortune, with the addition I may chooſe to make to it, will be too conſiderable to render paltry reſtrictions neceſſary, and to diſperſe our ſuperfluities I think not only a duty but a pleaſure."

Gertrude's heart was naturally grateful; and melted into tears by her aunt's kindneſs, ſhe exclaimed, as ſhe preſſed her hand to her lips, "Ah, madam, may I never forfeit your affection!"

"I have ſuch truſt in the innate rectitude of your mind, my dear Gertrude, that I think it impoſſible; and now we are on the ſubject let us properly underſtand each other. The power your mother gave me I reflect on with pleaſure, as it convinces me that ſhe eſteemed me; and if there was a coldneſs between us, it muſt ſolely be attributed to the difference of our diſpoſitions, and the want of properly conciliating her on my part. So far then, my love, it gives me pleaſure, but no

further. If I have no claim on your affection, I will have none by compulſion. Whenever you meet a worthy reſpectable man whom you can love, be aſſured of my acquieſcence; and though I ſhould certainly prefer his poſſeſſing ſome fortune, obſerve, I do not make it abſolutely neceſſary, ſo he is what I could entruſt with the happineſs of my niece."

What a moment for Gertrude! Her ſecret was almoſt on her lips, but a ſudden recollection convinced her that Berners was by ſome means ſo low in her aunt's eſtimation, that ſhe did not dare venture the diſcovery. Yet reſolved, if poſſible, to learn the real caſe, (for Berners' account and what had paſſed between herſelf and Frederic on the ſubject did not appear to accord,) ſhe ſaid, after expreſſing her gratitude, "Yet, Madam, amidſt the ſatisfaction I experience from your kindneſs, I have one unhappineſs.——Frederic, I am convinced, labours under your

your diſpleaſure. His abſence at my mother's death I hope you will not deem unpardonable; he was by no means aware how ill ſhe was any more than yourſelf, or doubtleſs would never have taken a journey without leaving proper orders with his ſervants."

"Of this laſt piece of imprudence I ſhall ſay little, as I have no doubt, if he has any feeling remaining, it will carry its puniſhment with it.—I am ſorry, my dear Gertrude, he will not let me eſteem him. I have already told him on what condition our friendſhip might continue; it is the diſmiſſal of Berners that I demand; for never can I call that perſon my friend who is in league with ſo vile a character."

Gertrude was too much affected to make any reply. She knew that ſome diſtaſte had ariſen in Mrs. Stanhope's breaſt againſt Berners, but had no idea it was ſo determined a reſentment. At length, however, ſhe muſtered courage to ſay heſitatingly, "I am grieved—

Frederic's partiality to Mr. Berners has long been fixed—His care of his youth —My father and mother highly reſpected him——"

"Becauſe they did not know him, Gertrude; nor ſhould I, but from his own imprudent behaviour to Montgomery in the Park.——I inſiſted on being informed of the cauſe, which Marian with ſome difficulty complied with; and I then learned that he had been deſpicable enough to call upon her, after ſeeing her once here, and make her an offer of a ſettlement from your brother, doubtleſs ſuppoſing her poverty would oblige her to accept it. As he would take no denial, ſhe was neceſſitated to call in her brother, who very properly ſhewed him the way to the door, with a cane in his hand; a circumſtance that humiliated Berners ſo greatly, that he inſiſted on his giving him ſatisfaction in the modern *honourable* manner; which Albert declining, he adopted the method you was witneſs

neſs to in the Park to provoke him to it."

Gertrude was almoſt incapable of returning any anſwer, but at length ſaid, "If you are aſſured, Madam, that he has acted thus——"

"I am convinced of what I aſſert," returned Mrs. Stanhope; "your brother owned the charge, but endeavoured to exculpate Berners, by taking the whole blame on himſelf.——Your mother I never informed of this event, as I thought it would only be giving her uſeleſs vexation, as Frederic is too old to be dictated to."

Mrs. Stanhope's ſervant entering with a letter for Gertrude put an end to the diſcourſe; it was from Frederic, and clearly demonſtrated the uneaſy ſtate of his mind. Gertrude preſented it to Mrs. Stanhope, who peruſed it with ſome concern, then returned it, ſaying, "I have no doubt he ſuffers; and in reſpect to you he ſpeaks generouſly.—I am ſorry we are not better friends, but

but my reſolution is unalterable.—— When you write, tell him I have not leiſure yet to think of the accounts, but will take ſome future opportunity."

Gertrude retired ſoon after to her apartment. What had paſſed ſurpriſed and ſhocked her; yet anxious to excuſe to her own conſcience the imprudent ſtep ſhe had taken, ſhe endeavoured to think Berners leſs guilty. But even granting that to have been effected, how could ſhe reconcile to her romantic fancy the humiliation he had ſuffered? for what hero of a love tale had ever been ſo ignominiouſly treated, as to be driven from a houſe with a cane?

The kindneſs of Mrs. Stanhope was not forgotten amidſt her other reflections: "How good, how conſiderate ſhe is!" ſaid Gertrude—"I muſt be a monſter to have any concealments from her; yet it is impoſſible to tell her of that fooliſh promiſe, for ſhe muſt deſpiſe me.——Heigho! moſt probably I ſhall

ſhall never marry. Berners neglected me ſtrangely while I was before in London, and I have often reſolved to forget him; yet, weak creature that I was, in one ſhort converſation I forgave all, and even gave him that abominable promiſe which has imbittered every hour of my life ſince."

CHAPTER VII.

AN EFFORT OF HUMANITY—A TRANSITION FROM DISLIKE TO SOMETHING LIKE APPROBATION.

MRS. Stanhope had nearly completed her buſineſs in town, when one afternoon as Gertrude and herſelf were ſitting after dinner, the ſervant announced Mr. Montgomery. Deſiring him to be immediately admitted, ſhe had only time to ſay to Gertrude, "A material alteration has taken place in the fortunes of Montgomery and his ſiſter, and which I did not relate to you, as I thought it might agreeably ſurpriſe you on our arrival in the country."

Mont-

Montgomery's entrance prevented reply, had Gertrude been inclined to make one; but ſhe felt no ſuch inclination, for, of all men, Montgomery ſhe moſt diſliked, on account of Berners.

Albert's compliments of condolence ſhewed at once the ſenſibility of his heart, and his politeneſs; but dwelling little on a ſubject which he conſidered muſt be painful, he informed Mrs. Stanhope that he was come to town on purpoſe to engage a ſkilful architect to ſuperintend ſome alterations his uncle intended to make——"after which," continued he, "Marian is to chooſe the decorations for the apartments which he means to be new furniſhed, as he judges truly that in that caſe her taſte will be ſuperior to mine. My commiſſion I ſhall complete to-morrow; and as in your letter you mentioned returning ſoon, perhaps, Madam, you will honour me ſo far as to accept my attendance."

"I ſhall accept it with pleaſure," anſwered Mrs. Stanhope, "as it may enliven

liven our party, which I aſſure you is rather of the melancholy caſt——And if you are not engaged this evening you may be our Ciciſbeo for a walk, which will be ſerviceable to both Gertrude and myſelf."

Albert bowed, and, after having taken coffee, attended the ladies in the coach to Hyde Park gate, where they got out to walk.

Never had Gertrude felt more uneaſily ſituated; but obliged to behave politely to Albert as her aunt's friend, her anſwers were coldly ceremonious; and as he preſented his hand to help her from the carriage, hers almoſt involuntarily recoiled.

The evening was remarkably fine, and Mrs. Stanhope preferred walking by the ſide of the Serpentine River to entering Kenſington Gardens, as ſhe conſidered it more private. Albert was uncommonly lively, and by his cheerful ſallies endeavoured to amuſe his companions. With Mrs. Stanhope he in ſome meaſure

ſure ſucceeded; but Gertrude was determined not to be amuſed, though ſhe found ſome difficulty to maintain her reſolution.

The evening began to draw in, and they were returning homeward, when they ſaw a woman on the oppoſite bank walking a quick pace. In cheerful converſation, neither Mrs. Stanhope nor Albert paid much attention to her; but Gertrude, whoſe eyes were fixed on the water, on a ſudden uttered a dreadful ſcream, and, claſping her hands, exclaimed, 'Merciful God! She will be drowned; ſhe has leaped into the river."

Mrs. Stanhope and Albert looked, and beheld the unhappy woman ſtruggling in the water, her clothes for a minute ſupporting her. Mrs. Stanhope appeared ſtiffened with horror, for with extended arms ſhe remained motionleſs. Albert was equally ſilent, but, with an alertneſs almoſt exceeding belief, tore off his coat and jumped into the water.

water. With dexterity and ſtrength he ſwam acroſs. The poor creature had ſunk twice; a third time her hand appeared, but more towards the middle of the river. Albert loſt not an inſtant, but, ſeizing her, brought her ſafe to the bank within thirty yards of the ſpot where he had left the ladies, it being the eaſieſt place to get her to land.

The feelings of Mrs. Stanhope and her niece during this ſcene are not to be deſcribed; but the ſight of Albert ſafe, with the object for whom he had ventured his life, reſtored not only the powers of ſpeech but the uſe of their feet. Both running towards him, Gertrude exclaimed, "Oh, how happy!—Heaven, heaven be praiſed!"

Mrs. Stanhope's fears had been equal; but time with her had ſomewhat calmed thoſe lively feelings that Gertrude ſo involuntarily gave way to. The endeavours of both were added to thoſe of Albert to reſtore the unhappy creature before them. Gertrude, as Albert

ſupported

ſupported her, tied up her hair, which had fallen over her face, with her cambric handkerchief; then tore off her cloak, and, wrapping it about her, ſaid, "Oh, how unfortunate that I have nothing elſe! for warmth, I have heard, is the greateſt reſtorative."

By this time a number of people began to flock round them, and offer their aſſiſtance; which Albert readily accepted, entreating Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude to retire—for he hoped all would be well, as he was convinced the young woman was not dead. Mrs. Stanhope, as there was now ſufficient aſſiſtance, conſented, inſiſting on Albert's uſing her carriage; but he peremptorily declined it, ſaying he would ſend immediately for a hackney coach when he had ſeen the young woman ſomewhat reſtored, and that they ſhould hear from him in the courſe of the evening.

Mrs. Stanhope, obliged to acquieſce, with her niece ſoon reached the Park gate, and, entering the carriage, returned home.

Mrs.

Mrs. Stanhope's anxiety ſtill continued when ſhe reflected on the dripping ſtate in which they had left Albert; and after ſome time ſhe ſaid, "Was ever any thing ſo imprudent as I have acted? I never, in my alarm, thought to aſk Montgomery where he lodged; and he ſimply ſaid this afternoon tha the was at an hotel."

Gertrude felt equally anxious for the ſafety of both; for, in her alarm, ſhe had almoſt forgotten her deteſtation of Albert; and as the woman, from what ſlight judgement ſhe could form, was young and handſome, ſhe had no doubt but love was the cauſe of the raſh ſtep ſhe had taken.

Three hours had already elapſed, and Mrs. Stanhope, more and more uneaſy, had ſent her ſervants every where ſhe ſuppoſed it likely to find Albert, but without effect. Supper had been announced, but declined; and ſilent anxiety ſat on the features of both ladies, when a ſmart knock at the ſtreet-door made them

ſtart,

ſtart, and Montgomery's voice aſking for Mrs. Stanhope at leaſt convinced them of his ſafety. He had changed his clothes, and entered the room with his uſual vivacity. "I have the ſatisfaction, ladies," ſaid he, "to inform you that the poor girl who cauſed you ſuch alarm is reſtored. We moved her to the firſt houſe, where the uſual means were ſoon ſucceſsful. I then went and changed my clothes; ſince which I have again called, and was informed ſhe was aſleep."

"I rejoice to hear it," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope; "but ſurely it was the height of imprudence for you to venture out again this evening. Had you not better have gone to bed? It might have prevented the ill effects of cold. You could have ſent us word that all was well."

"In the firſt place, Madam," returned Albert, "I think exerciſe the moſt efficacious for keeping off the effects of cold. In the next, I muſt inform you, that from my childhood I have been accuſtomed

cuſtomed to ſwimming, and indeed all bodily exerciſes; which added to a conſtitution naturally robuſt, makes me leſs ſubject to cold, or fatigue, than thoſe more delicately educated. The only inconvenience I experience is, that the water has made me uncommonly hungry."

Mrs. Stanhope immediately ordered ſupper; during which Albert, who ſaw her apprehenſions for him had not entirely ſubſided, exerted his utmoſt vivacity to convince her that her fears were groundleſs; relating ludicrous ſtories, and aſſuming the Scottiſh dialect, until at length he baniſhed her alarm, and provoked repeated laughter from Gertrude, however reſolved to the contrary. At twelve Mrs. Stanhope inſiſted on his uſing her carriage to his hotel; which through politeneſs being complied with, the ladies bade him good night, and ſoon after retired to their reſpective chambers.

The occurrences of the afternoon had been too numerous to ſuffer Gertrude

to

to have any great inclination to ſleep; therefore, diſmiſſing her maid, ſhe ſat ſome time reflecting on what had paſſed. Had her heart been diſengaged, in all probability Montgomery's conduct in reſpect to the unhappy girl, by agreeing not only with her natural diſpoſition but her romantic one, would have gained it; for in ſhe reality admired him, though ſhe would not ſuffer herſelf to think ſo.

"To confeſs the truth," ſaid ſhe, "he is the moſt graceful man I ever ſaw; and his ſkill in ſwimming, though I reflect on it with horror, ſurpaſſes every idea I could form. He doubtleſs was aware of his dexterity before he undertook ſo dangerous an enterpriſe. He is too cheerful," continued ſhe after a moment's pauſe, "to poſſeſs much ſenſibility. Had Berners been fortunate enough to reſcue a fellow creature from ſuch a ſituation, how different would have been his feelings! He poſſeſſes ſo much delicacy, ſo much ſoftneſs, that he inſenſibly intereſts the heart; while

on the contrary, this boiſterous Montgomery treats the greateſt dangers merely as common occurrences, and by his vivacity deſtroys their effect on the mind. If what Mrs. Stanhope advances reſpecting Berners is true, though I cannot help thinking it has been exaggerated to her, I am not ſo much aſtoniſhed at Montgomery's conduct; yet ſurely nothing was ever ſo dreadfully humiliating! Berner's affection to my brother is great, but could not, I think, carry him to ſuch diſhonourable lengths."

Weary with unpleaſant reflections, Gertrude at length undreſſed, and went to reſt.

CHAPTER VIII.

CURIOUS PEOPLE, LIKE LISTENERS, FREQUENTLY LEARN NO GOOD OF THEMSELVES.

IN the morning Montgomery ſent a note to inquire after the ladies' health, informing them he was perfectly well, and with their permiſſion would wait on them in the evening.—Mrs. Stanhope returning for anſwer, that ſhe ſhould be glad of his company, at the appointed time he was announced; when, having anſwered her enquiries reſpecting himſelf, her next queſtion was of the young woman. "She is ſo much recovered, Madam," ſaid he, "that I have removed her from the houſe, which was a public

one, to Mrs. Moſely's, who I know will be kind to her. If we find her act properly, Marian, I fancy, can make free enough with my uncle's purſe to aſſiſt her hereafter."

"Mine is ready on the ſame occaſion," anſwered Mrs. Stanhope; "but have you been able to learn the cauſe of the raſh act ſhe was ſo near perpetrating?"

"Not entirely Madam. I do not think her depraved; but ſeduced and abandoned, ſhe had neither religion nor fortitude to ſupport her from deſpair."

"Poor creature," replied Mrs. Stanhope, "if poſſible, in future ſhe muſt be preſerved from error. Would it be of any ſervice for Gertrude and me to call at Mrs. Moſely's."

"As you pleaſe, Madam," replied Albert;—"but, as ſhe is perfectly ſafe, might it not be as well to know more of her before you were farther intereſted? She complains of her head, and queſtions diſtreſs her."

Mrs.

Mrs. Stanhope had ſo high an opinion of Albert's honour and conduct, that ſhe immediately acquieſced; but Gertrude, who had read a thouſand ſtories of *heroes* who had fallen in love in ſuch perilous ſituations, placed his anſwer to another account, and ardently longed to learn further, as ſhe had no doubt but that he wiſhed to conceal her from them.

In two days Albert's buſineſs was completed; but the delay of the lawyers ſtill detained Mrs. Stanhope, and Montgomery declined going without her; at length, however, the gentlemen of the robe appointed a morning to attend her with a final arrangement.

"My dear Gertrude," ſaid ſhe, "as ſhe informed her of it, I know not how you will amuſe yourſelf while I am employed with theſe prolix gentlemen, for I fancy it will be diſagreeable for you to be preſent. What think you of an airing? The exerciſe will be of ſervice."

Gertrude, whoſe curioſity reſpecting the young woman had not ſubſided, re-

plied, "I want a few articles, Madam, from the milliner's. And if you have no objection, I will call and order them.

Mrs. Stanhope anſwered, that ſhe alſo wanted ſome trifles, which ſhe deſired her to beſpeak; and the coach being ordered, Gertrude ſoon reached Mrs. Moſely's.

Gertrude felt ſomewhat diſappointed when informed that Mrs. Moſely was out; but on inquiry, finding ſhe was ſoon expected, left the carriage, and ſaid ſhe would wait. A journeywoman immediately ſhewed her into the dining-room where a young woman, who was at work alone, aroſe, and would have left the apartment, had not Gertrude, who immediately recogniſed her for the perſon who had ſo greatly intereſted her, entreated her ſo warmly to reſume her ſeat, that common politeneſs obliged her to replace herſelf. Miſs St. Auſtyn obſerved her accurately. She was very young, and her features perfectly handſome; but her

her complexion pale and ſickly, and her eyes ſunken, deſtroyed the effect of the whole. Gertrude knew not how to begin; yet reſolved, if poſſible, not to loſe the opportunity; ſhe at length ſaid, though heſitatingly, and with great kindneſs, "Why do you work untill your health is better? I am ſure you have friends who will make ſuch exertion unneceſſary."—"Ah, Madam," replied ſhe, ſtarting, "do you then know? Mr. Montgomery told me a young lady was the cauſe of my being ſaved; perhaps I am now before her."

"Do not be alarmed," replied Gertrude, replacing her, for ſhe had riſen; "I believe I firſt ſaw you; but to Mr. Montgomery's exertions alone you are indebted for ſafety. Endeavour to recover your health and ſpirits, and you ſhall not want aſſiſtance."

Ah, Madam," anſwered ſhe, "I am undeſerving of your goodneſs, I have been a faulty abandoned creature, but I will bear my ſhame in future with patience."

"You may have been unfortunate," replied Gertrude; "intentionally wicked I cannot think you would be."

"You think too well of me, Madam," anſwered ſhe. "You are young and beautiful, and I hope too rich for any man to attempt to deceive."

Gertrude ſhuddered. It appeared as if the young girl had divined her ſecret; but knowing that impoſſible, ſhe ſaid, "It would diſtreſs you too much to inform me of your misfortunes, or I would requeſt it, as I might the more intereſt my aunt in your favour."

"So much do I feel I owe you, Madam," replied ſhe, "that I have no right nor inclination to refuſe but in one circumſtance, which however will be immaterial to you; I muſt conceal the name of a lady, having pledged my word on that ſubject to Mr. Montgomery, who ſays he is aſſured it is ſo ſcandalous a falſehood that it ought never to be mentioned."

Gertrude's ſuſpicions of Montgomery recurred

recurred with redoubled force; and deſiring the young woman to conſider her as a friend, and relate only what ſhe thought fit, after a ſhort pauſe ſhe began as follows:

"My name is Elizabeth Southern—Bitter reflection! two ſhort months ago I had a mother. She kept a houſe, and ſupported herſelf and me creditably by letting lodgings; for ſhe had been a widow many years. About twelve months ago I went into the country to ſtay with my aunt, who was ſick, and remained ſome time with her, until ſhe being nearly recovered, I returned home. During my abſence my mother had taken two new lodgers, a Mr. St. Auſtyn, and his friend Mr. Berners. We ſaw very little of the gentlemen, for they were uſually out.——But bleſs me, Madam, you are ill; you will faint; I will call aſſiſtance—."

Gertrude caught her gown, and begged her to deſiſt, ſaying ſhe was ſubject

to be ſuddenly ſick, entreated her not to mind it, but continue her ſtory.

"I had been at home but a few days, when one morning my mother was ſeized with an apoplectic fit. My cries brought down Mr. St. Auſtyn, who with unparalleled kindneſs ran inſtantly for help, for I had no one at home. My mother recovered, and Mr. St. Auſtyn left our houſe two or three days after to go into the country. But his friend excuſed himſelf, as he afterwards told me, on my account, for he could not bear to leave me. In ſhort, Madam, he purſued me every where, and ſpoke in the moſt honourable manner, but begged me to be ſecret even to my mother for a ſhort time, until he had ſettled an affair that gave him much concern, and which was no other than his being engaged to marry a lady of rank and fortune, whoſe friends would ruin him if he refuſed.—As I rather diſbelieved this, he ſhewed me a paper that corroborated what he ſaid, as

it was a promiſe of marriage from a lady, and ſigned with her name. — Indeed, Miſs, you are ill: permit me to call ſome one."

Gertrude caught her hand—"No," ſaid ſhe; "a little water will reſtore me—."

"Betſey Southern fetched a glaſs of water which Gertrude having drank, ſhe entreated her to continue, ſaying, "but you have not mentioned the lady's name; that you cannot be bound to conceal."

"Indeed, Madam, that is the only circumſtance. I related the whole to Mr. Montgomery; but he made me promiſe, whoever queſtioned me, never more to diſcloſe it; nor will I make ſo ungrateful a return for his ſaving my life as to forfeit my word. Beſide, he ſaid he was aſſured it was a ſcandalous falſehood and forgery, for that Mr. Berners was too inſignificant to be thought of either by the lady or her friends.—I however, Madam, did not ſuppoſe the man I loved a villain, and, no friend to adviſe with, believed all he ſaid, frequently

meeting him in the Park, and elſewhere in public places, without any behaviour of his that could alarm my fears. At length Mr. St. Auſtyn returned from the country, and by what means I know not, but he had ſurely diſcovered our ſecret intimacy, for he gave up the lodgings in a few days; and never ſhall the morning he went away be eraſed from my memory. He ſaluted and bid me farewell before my mother, ſaying that he ſhould not have taken that liberty in her abſence; then markingly told me, that when I met with a man who to my own conſent added *my mother's approbation*, he ſhould think himſelf happy to preſent me to him at the altar, giving me a ring as a memorial.—Even this caution was unavailing. Mr. Berners had more power than virtue; for I continued meeting him as before, until one fatal evening he complained of being ill, and entreated me to enter a houſe with him. Here he perſuaded me to take a glaſs of lemonade——excuſe me, Madam

from

ſrom what followed, I ſcarcely know myſelf—Suffice it, that had it been arſenic I had been happy."

Betſey for ſome moments was incapable of proceeding, and Gertrude equally ſo to entreat it.

"At length, Madam, he put me into a coach, and accompanied me nearly to my mother's, for I appeared to myſelf as one intoxicated with liquor. I knocked repeatedly, but no one anſwered; and my mother and the ſervant being alone in the houſe, I felt ſome alarm. The watchman paſſed, calling eleven o'clock. Until that moment I had no idea of the hour, and how to excuſe ſuch a long abſence in ſome meaſure took place of my fears. The watchman now knocked for me, and at length ſucceeded in awakening the maid, who, half a ſleep, came down and opened the door.—'Bleſs me, Miſs!' ſaid ſhe, 'I wonder my miſtreſs has not let you in. She ordered me to go to bed, but would not ſtir herſelf; ſhe was dreadfully uneaſy, but

but doubtleſs has fallen aſleep.' I ſnatched the candle which ſhe had lighted at the watchman's lanthern, ruſhed into the back parlour, where my mother uſually ſlept, and there do I live to relate it! beheld her black, ſtiff, and dead.—Oh Miſs you weep. I could weep before I had committed ſuch crimes; but now my brain is burnt up, you know not what comfort it gives me when I can ſhed tears."

A ſhort pauſe enſued, and Betſey continued: "My mother, anxious for my ſafety, and doubtleſs ſuppoſing ſomething dreadful from my long abſence, had been ſeized with a ſecond apopletic fit; and though the doctor declared that had I been preſent all aſſiſtance would have been uſeleſs, yet I never ſhall think but alarm for my abſence brought it on, and that God ſnatched her away that ſhe might never know my ſhame."

The wildneſs in Betſey's eyes alarmed the trembling Gertrude, and taking her hand ſhe ſaid, "You ſhall tell me more when

when we next meet; at preſent you are too much affected."

"No," replied ſhe, "I will never more, if poſſible enter on the ſubject. Liſten to it now. I ſhall ſpeedily have concluded. My mother was buried and being in debt, our goods were ſold to pay them, and myſelf removed into a little lodging at Knightſbridge, where I never heard nor ſaw any thing of Berners until that fatal evening Mr. Montgomery ſaved me, when on a ſudden he entered my chamber, and talked ſomething of death, and the country—but indeed I knew not what— for my head ached ſadly. I only remember he ſaid, that now my mother was gone we could enjoy ourſelves without ſo much trouble; and then endeavouring to claſp me in his arms, I ſhrunk from him, ruſhed down ſtairs and into the Park——."

"Spare me, ſpare yourſelf!" interrupted Gertrude: What has my unpardonable curioſity occaſioned?—— Great God! that I of all people ſhould

ſhould be deſtined to tear open your wounds!"

"You are an angel," exclaimed Betſey, "for you have done for me what I cannot do for myſelf—wept for me. May I not know your name? Indeed, while I live I will pray for you—but ſurely you will condeſcend to ſee me again?"

"Undoubtedly I will," anſwered Gertrude; "you ſhall never want a friend while I have life or power to help you."

"Mr. Montgomery ſaid you were good and gentle, and that I ſhould know your name hereafter——."

"It is uſeleſs and cruel to conceal it. My——"

The voice of Montgomery coming haſtily up ſtairs prevented Gertrude from continuing. How different were her ideas of him from thoſe ſhe entertained when ſhe entered the houſe! His reaſon for keeping both her aunt and herſelf away from Mrs. Moſely's was now clearly proved not to be on his account, but on theirs; his binding Bet-

ſey likewiſe to ſecreſy—all conſpired to overwhelm her at once with gratitude and ſhame; and gladly would ſhe have concealed herſelf any where from his preſence.

"Here and alone!" exclaimed Montgomery, entering the room without ceremony. "Pardon me, Madam, if I ſay this viſit is imprudent. Miſs Southern wants quiet and reſt, queſtions diſtract her; and I know that you would not injure her. I alſo had flattered myſelf that a promiſe ſhe had made me—."

"Nor have I forfeited it," interrupted ſhe mournfully. You think my head is bad, and indeed it is ſo; but yet, while I can remember my own ſhame and my mother's death, I ſhall alſo remember my obligations——I have ſcandalized no innocent. *She* wept for me," pointing to Gertrude,—"and, though you declined it, would have told me her name."

"I beg, Madam, I entreat," ſaid Albert, taking Gertrude's hand, "that you return home."

"I cannot

"I cannot leave her unſatisfied," replied Gertrude, endeavouing to withdraw her hand.

"I inſiſt, Madam." Then turning to Betſey he ſaid, I have no doubt, Miſs Southern, that this lady will be your friend; I will alſo venture to promiſe for my ſiſter; but do not ſeek to learn what at this moment is improper for you to know." With theſe words ſcarcely leaving Gertrude an alternative, he led her from the room.

As they entered the parlour, Montgomery, releaſing Miſs St. Auſtyn's hand, ſaid, "Pardon, Madam, my rude intruſion; but I feared the tenderneſs of your nature might lead you into explanations that I judged improper.—The miſeries this poor girl has ſuffered bewilder her; time may ſoothe her anguiſh, when it will be ſoon enough for her to be informed to whom ſhe is obliged."

"Not to me," ſaid Gertrude, not daring to raiſe her eyes for fear of meeting thoſe of Montgomery.

To the great relief of Gertrude, Mrs. Moſely at that moment entered, and Albert walked into the ſhop, though he by no means appeared inclined to leave her behind him.—With ſome difficulty ſhe recollected the orders ſhe had to give, and bidding Mrs. Moſely good morning, prepared to depart. Montgomery preſented his hand to help her into the carriage, ſaying he hoped to have the honour of ſeeing her aunt in the evening. Gertrude, who was unequal to converſation, bowed, without raiſing her eyes or uttering a word.

"Merciful God, what have I done!" ſaid ſhe when alone; "my curioſity is properly repaid, and what a monſter have I fixed upon to look up to for future happineſs and protection! Never—— Sooner would I face death than give my hand to ſuch a man. How arbitrary did I think Mrs. Stanhope's proceeding! I now ſee it was dictated by reaſon and judgement. Poor Frederic, to fall into ſuch hands! Barbarous unfeeling unprincipled

principled hypocrite, to expoſe my folly in order to facilitate his own villany!—In what a light muſt I appear to my aunt, when it comes to be known?—What can Montgomery think of me? Perhaps he places me on a parallel with the poor deluded girl whoſe life he preſerved.—Oh! I cannot bear the reflection. Yet how to act without advice; and whom dare I conſult in ſuch a criſis?——Mrs. Stanhope, I am ſure loves me; but by revealing all, at once to forfeit her good opinion, I cannot bear to think of.—Yet ſhould ſhe hear it by any other means, it would be yet more dreadful.—There appears to me but one alternative, in which Heaven ſupport me! It is to throw myſelf at her feet and confeſs all. If ſhe ſpurns me, at leaſt I ſhall enjoy the reflection that in this *laſt* act I did my duty, and it is fit that ſuch errors as mine ſhould be followed by bitter repentance."

Theſe uneaſy thoughts employed Gertrude during her way home. Mrs. Stanhope's

hope's viſitors had completed their buſineſs, and were gone. Her cheeks wan and her eyes ſwollen, alarmed her aunt, who with the moſt ſoothing kindneſs inquired what had happened.——

"My dear Madam," replied Gertrude, endeavouring to aſſume an air of calmneſs that ſhe was far from feeling, "I have ſuffered greatly this morning, and am ſenſible that I deſerve it all My unpardonable curioſity, rather than any real neceſſity, took me to Mrs. Moſely's, in order to ſee the unhappy girl Mr. Montgomery has placed there. I ſucceeded, heard her ſtory, and have among other painful ſubjects, learned that my life has hitherto been replete with error and folly."

Mrs. Stanhope gazed at her with aſtoniſhment. "*Your* life!" ſaid ſhe: "indeed, my dear girl, your curioſity was very blamable, but the effect it appears to have produced is ſufficient without reproach."

"Ah, Madam, what reproach ſo bitter

bitter as ſelf-reproach? Should you ever diſpiſe me—but my reſolution is taken; you ſhall ſee my heart without diſguiſe, whatever be the conſequence."

Mrs. Stanhope almoſt thought her deranged." "My love," ſaid ſhe, "this poor girl's misfortunes have made too great an impreſſion on you."

"Oh, Madam," exclaimed Gertrude, burſting into tears, "your kindneſs is more painful to me than harſhneſs, for I feel how little I deſerve it. You know not how dreadfully imprudent I have been; and though not abſolutely guilty, it is perhaps more the effect of chance than any merit I can aſſume."

"Gertrude," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope, now really alarmed, "you diſtreſs me; you ought to be aſſured of my affection: confide then in me; the advice of a friend may be ſalutary."

Gertrude fell at her feet, and, concealing her face, replied, "What, Madam, will you ſay when I confeſs that I have given a promiſe of marriage to the greateſt

greateſt villain that ever diſgraced human nature."

"I muſt ſay," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "that you have acted very imprudently, as your heart already appears to inform you; but if you are not married, which I think impoſſible, there is yet room for hope. But who has been vile enough to practiſe thus on your inexperience?"

"I dare not name him."

"Berners then," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope.—"I once or twice thought there was ſomething particular in his behaviour; but as I hate ſuſpicion, baniſhed the idea. Say, have I not judged rightly?"

Gertrude's ſilence was an affirmative. "Deliberate, deſpicable villain! My heart was never ſatisfied with that man. ——But how happens it, Gertrude, that your mind is ſo changed? for now I recollect that even a few days ago you ſpoke reſpectfully of him."

Gertrude, as well as her tears and emotion

emotion would permit, related all that had paſſed that morning.

"Merciful Heaven!" ſaid Mrs. Stanhope as ſhe concluded, "from what a precipice have you eſcaped! The immediate hand of Providence was in your meeting with this girl. Berners doubtleſs ſuppoſed, that at my ſiſter's death your fortune would be at your own diſpoſal; for he could have no idea but to impoſe on your inexperience, as a promiſe thus obtained under age cannot be binding. Cheer up, therefore; my diſpleaſure ſhall not be added to your ſufferings; the confidence you have ſhewn flatters me that you will act cautiouſly for the future."

Gertrude could not thank her, but felt as if an oppreſſive weight was removed from her breaſt; and, when more compoſed, related every circumſtance from which her folly with Berners had ariſen.

"Your brother, I think," ſaid Mrs. Stanhope, "cannot be privy to this buſineſs,

ſineſs, I will however write to him when we reach home. If he is, I utterly renounce him for ever."

Gertrude entirely exculpated Frederic, by relating the converſation that had taken place in Yorkſhire.

Towards evening Montgomery was announced, and Gertrude, entreating her aunt's excuſe, withdrew to her chamber.

CHAPTER IX.

DEPARTURE FOR THE COUNTRY—AN OLD BACHELOR RECOMMENDING MARRIAGE.

MRS. Stanhope immediately entered on the topic which was moſt on her thoughts, and without diſguiſe related the whole to Albert, concluding by aſking him why he had not at firſt informed her of it.

"To confeſs the truth, Madam," replied he, "I hoped, nay I believed, the part in which Miſs St. Auſtyn's name occurred, to be a ſcandalous falſehood, until this morning, when her bluſhes and confuſion made me waver in that opinion.—To mention

mention it to Miſs St. Auſtyn, had I even found an opportunity, I felt would be highly improper; and excuſe me when I freely declare, that I could not indure to name to you. I had therefore reſolved to intruſt the whole to Marian and deſired her to diſcloſe it to Miſs St. Auſtyn, as I was aſſured ſhe would treat the ſubject more delicately than I could. — Miſs Southern believes the paper a forgery, as does alſo Mrs. Moſely, who was preſent when ſhe made the relation; and my fears this day were, that Miſs St. Auſtyn ſhould undeceive them if it was not really ſo— Had I been on terms of friendſhip with Mr. St. Auſtyn, I ſhould not have heſitated to inform him of the whole. As it is, it will have more effect from you, and doubtleſs unmaſk the villain who ſo long had deceived him, and would have made a prey of the unſuſpecting innocence of his ſiſter."

After ſome farther diſcourſe, Mrs. Stanhope informed Albert that ſhe ſhould be ready the enſuing morning to depart

for the country, and he took leave at an early hour.

Albert on horſeback attended the ladies at the time Mrs. Stanhope had appointed, and during the journey, which laſted two days, accompanied their chaiſe. The weather was fine. Mrs. Stanhope was kind, and Albert polite and attentive; but nothing could remove the depreſſion of Gertrude, who, ſeverely humiliated in her own eyes, conſidered herſelf unavoidably ſo in thoſe of her companions.

On their arrival they found the Colonel and Marian waiting to receive them. From the firſt information he had obtained of Mrs. Stanhope having charge of her neice, he had ardently wiſhed her to be ſuch as might captivate his nephew, whom he longed to ſee married. The beauty of Gertrude, and the gentleneſs of her manners, therefore, enchanted him; and attributing the cloud of melancholy that hung over her merely to her recent loſs, he determined to loſe no time

time in declaring his thoughts to Montgomery.

Accordingly, after they had ſupped, they returned to Blackwood, Marain having reſumed her ſituation at the Vale.

On reaching home, the Colonel called for a bottle of wine, and, pouring out a bumper, winked at his nephew, and drank Gertrude St. Auſtyn.

"With all my heart, Sir," replied Montgomery, pledging his uncle's toaſt.

"A good pretty girl, Albert."

"A very fine girl, Sir."

"This is juſt what I wiſhed: I all along hoped you would like her."

"Every one related to Mr. Stanhope, Sir, muſt in ſome meaſure be eſtimable to me."

"*Eſtimable* to the devil!—Why, you are as cool as a cucumber in the buſineſs; at your age, ſuch a girl would have ſet my heart in a blaze."

"Heaven be praiſed, Sir, mine is not made of ſuch inflammable materials."

"So much the worſe, Sir. A ſuſceptible heart, at all events, is preferable to an impenetrable one."

"That muſt be granted, Sir," returned Albert; "but extremes of all kinds are dangerous."

"Commend me to the moderation of a fellow of twenty-two!—Why, zounds, I judged of you by myſelf; I had no moderation at your age."

"With ſo ſuſceptible a heart, Sir," ſaid Montgomery, "I am aſtoniſhed you never married."

"You are for ever poking your noſe where you have no buſineſs," anſwered the Colonel:—but, good Sir, that your aſtoniſhment may ceaſe, the real reaſon perhaps was, that I did not feel that diſpoſition in myſelf I thought neceſſary to make a deſerving woman happy.

"My dear uncle, I beg pardon for the queſtion, but the reaſon is too reſpectable not to do you honour."

"Your humble ſervant, Sir. But that won't do. Pleaſe to come back to where

where we left off, and anſwer this plain queſtion: Should you like Miſs St. Auſtyn for a wife? I hope you underſtand me now."

"Perfectly, Sir; but really I have never given the ſubject a thought. It is an honour."

"Honour! — A fool's head! — The plain truth is, you don't like the girl, or you are not ſo deviliſh modeſt. I wonder what the plague you would have. Is ſhe not a charming girl, almoſt as handſome as Marian? Is ſhe not your friend Mrs. Stanhope's neice? and has ſhe not a good fortune?"

"Miſs St. Auſtyn, Sir, in my opinion, is handſomer than Marian; and on her own account, as well as Mrs. Stanhope's, reſpectable; and for her fortune——."

"It is above your expectations, or beneath your conſideration, Sir," interrupted the Colonel.—"One of theſe wiſe ſpeeches you was on the point of concluding with; and now, to anſwer to the firſt, I think that I am the beſt

judge of the buſineſs, that Miſs St. Auſtyn's fortune is *not* above what you may expect.—Or Sir, if you meant that it was beneath your conſideration, at leaſt you might endow an hoſpital for idiots, and be yourſelf at the head of the community."

Montgomery ſmiled, without reply. "Don't laugh, Sir, when you provoke me. I ſuppoſe you think that I am more calculated to ſuperintend ſuch an eſtabliſhment.—You own the girl handſome, and reſpectable; yet forſooth you cannot, I ſuppoſe, love her. Don't go too far, Albert, I am not the firſt old fool who, horn mad, has got a young wife and an heir to his eſtate."

"A child of your own, Sir, would have the neareſt claim to your favour."

"Z—ds, Sir, I don't ſuppoſe that it would be my own—but anſwer me pray: do you never intend to marry?"

"I have no objection to marriage, Sir, on the contrary, the example of my parents has rendered the ſtate eſtimable to me.

me. But even granting me willing to look up to ſo ſuperior a match as Miſs St. Auſtyn, which I am far from intending, how can I be aſſured ſhe would not refuſe me?"

"Try her, try her; not one woman in a thouſand would refuſe ſuch a fellow as you, if you choſe to be upon your mettle. How ſpeedily did you win my heart! and do you think women are more difficult to pleaſe."

"The inference is not juſt, Sir," replied Montgomery: "I had a friend previouſly in the fort."

"That's true, however; and the treacherous dog ſurrendered the citadel whether I would or no."

"And when I merit to be driven from it intentionally, may I be plunged into every miſery that can oppreſs man."

The Colonel made no reply, but ſtretched out his hand to his nephew, drank his health in a bumper, wiſhed him cordially a good night, and retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER X.

A LIBERTINE'S FEELINGS.

OPPRESSED with melancholy, Frederic remained near a month in Yorkſhire; the perſuations of Berners being unavailing to baniſh ſorrow by the pleaſures of the metropolis.

At this period he received a demand for a ſettlement from the jew who had advanced the money, which obliged him to diſpatch Berners on that buſineſs, and who arrived in London the day Montgomery providentially ſaved Betſey Southern.

The firſt hours Berners had given to buſineſs, but the evening hanging heavily

vily on his hands, ſhe occured to his memory. Had left town the day after having affected his purpoſe, and without beſtowing a thought on the anguiſh he had planted in her boſom.

Finding her mother's houſe ſhut up, he inquired among the neighbours and was ſoon informed of her death, and the daughter's removal—No pang of compunction touched Berners: haſtening to her addreſs, he entered her apartment with his uſual levity; for once ſucceſsful, he had no doubt of reducing the unhappy girl to become a willing votary of diſhonour, but rather imprudent than naturally wicked, the ſhock of her mother's death and the abſence of her lover had given her time to reflect, and that ſo acutely, that at times it almoſt amounted to phrenzy. Berners' behaviour was not calculated to ſoothe her, for he no longer conſidered it neceſſary to aſſume a conduct foreign to his character; and claſping her in his arms he congratulated her on what had happened, as it left her intirely

miſtreſs of her own actions. This inſult, as ſhe now felt it, was too great to be endured: ſtarting from his embrace, ſhe ruſhed from the houſe into the ſtreet, and with wild diſordered ſteps reached the Park, where ſhe made her deſperate attempt without reflection, and to eſcape a retroſpection ſhe could no longer bear. Berners was at firſt amazed at her ſudden flight; but judging that his neglect and other circumſtances had diſpleaſed her, determined for the preſent to give up the purſuit; and having waited ſome time, and finding ſhe did not return, he left a note and retired, reſolved to ſeek amuſement elſewhere.

As it was not yet dark, he determined to croſs Hyde Park, and had nearly reached Groſvenor gate, when a crowd attracted his attention, though not ſufficiently to have made him ſtop, had he not diſcovered at the head of the party the man on earth he moſt abhorred, and from his conduct and bodily ſtrength equally dreaded. Prudence and min-

gled curioſity made him draw aſide, for he obſerved Montgomery was dripping with water, and queſtioning a man, who was ſomewhat behind the crowd, he ſoon learned that the young gentleman had brought the body of a woman that had drowned herſelf out of the water.—"Is ſhe dead?" ſaid Berners careleſsly.—"Dead, aye, maſter; dead as a door nail," replied the man—"you may ſee her if you get into the crowd, ſhe ſeems to have been a pretty wench and quite young."

Beauty was never unintereſting to Berners, and drawing nearer he glanced his eyes over the ſhoulders of ſome of the ſurrounding multitude, and beheld what might have proved fatal to any man who had the ſmalleſt ſpark of feeling or humanity, the victim of his unreſtrained vices pale and apparently dead, borne by four men who were conveying her to the neareſt houſe.

"Confuſion," exclaimed he, ſtarting back, and with a quick pace haſtening from

from the ſight, "is it poſſible the girl ſhould have been ſuch an idiot. Montgomery too, of all men, Quixotte like, to dive after her, appears almoſt ſurpaſſing belief; and though her death ſhocks me, yet had he periſhed with her, I think I could have indured the evil for the ſake of the good; but by my ſoul I think he is invulnerable, and my evil genius, Sir, for go where I will, he is perpetually croſſing my way."

Berners walked haſtily back until he reached Piccadilly, almoſt without noticing where he was going; at length becoming more collected, he repented he had not watched where the body was taken; a few moments reflection however baniſhed that idea, for as the dead tell no tales, he thought it moſt prudent not to appear in the buſineſs; and he had no doubt from her appearance, that every ſpark of life was extinguiſhed. His pleaſurable ſchemes were however deſtroyed for the evening, and calling a coach he ſoon reached home; when after drinking

drinking a double quantity of wine to ſtifle reflection, he retired to reſt. On the enſuing morning Berners, by appointment, met the uſurer who had advanced the money; but ſome diſpute happening in the arrangement, he declined the final ſettlement until Frederic ſhould be preſent; and in conſequence, by that evening's poſt requeſted his return. Alone and almoſt weary with his ſtay in the country, Frederic immediately obeyed the ſummons; his contrition time had ſoftened, and the ſame evil ſpirit again at his elbow, his laudable reſolution, formed in the hour of reflection, began to give way: his female engagement was renewed; and in addition to his town-houſe, a ready furniſhed one near Kew was hired for the purpoſe of entertaining ſelect parties of both ſexes: in ſhort, riot, which libertines call pleaſure, was again the buſineſs of the day, and diſſipation that of the night. Notwithſtanding, it is but juſtice to allow that he had yet his moments of compunction; but it is the nature of

of vice by frequent repetition to deaden the feelings.

Berners too was not without his moments of uneaſineſs, for though he truſted greatly to the power he had over the mind of Frederic, yet the deſpicable arts he had uſed to enſnare his ſiſter frequently overwhelmed him with fear, leſt they ſhould be diſcovered: and uncertain how to act in ſuch a criſis, he had not written to Gertrude ſince her mother's death. To obtain Mrs. Stanhope's conſent he well knew it was impoſſible, and to incumber himſelf with a portionleſs wife, he had not ever the moſt diſtant inclination; for he was far from ſuſpecting the diſcovery Gertrude had made.

That the coolneſs between Mrs. Stanhope and her nephew continued, gave him infinite ſatisfaction, as it prevented all intercourſe, and Miſs St. Auſtyn he had no doubt would keep the ſecret of her imprudence concealed for her own ſake.

Thus

Thus were they ſituated, when one morning Frederic being out, and Berners alone, the ſervant entered with ſeveral letters, and laying them on the table retired. The addreſs of one of them inſtantly caught Berners' attention, as it was the writing of Gertrude; and though it was certainly nothing extraordinary for a ſiſter to write to her brother, yet guilt had made him ſuſpicious. He examined yet further, one in a fair Italian hand increaſed his curioſity, as he knew it for Mrs. Stanhope's; and reſolving not to bear the torments of ſuſpenſe, he put both in his pocket and retired to his chamber.

That from Mrs. Stanhope contained his own written promiſe to Gertrude, a ſight that at once made him congratulate himſelf on the ſtep he had taken; it likewiſe diſcloſed the whole of his duplicity, and conjured her nephew in terms mingled with affection, to give up all intercourſe with ſo bad a man.—" If you refuſe," added ſhe, towards

wards the end of the letter—"we are henceforward ſtrangers for ever; duty, honour, rectitude, all require it: I flatter myſelf you cannot remain on terms of friendſhip with one who would have betrayed your ſiſter, meanly to have preyed on her fortune; thank Heaven, the clauſe in my ſiſter's will was not unneceſſary to be enforced; an unexpected but providential event revealed her danger; yet, while it diſcloſed her weakneſs and inexperience, has rendered her ſtill dearer to my heart; as we have now that mutual confidence in each other that is the only real cement of friendſhip—Farewell, I cannot doubt but thus convinced you will haſten hither, Gertrude being impatient to embrace a brother, and myſelf a nephew, whom I wiſh to eſteem."

Such was the language of Mrs. Stanhope's letter; and containing a diſcloſure of ſo much duplicity, had it been received, there can be no doubt but that it would have awakened Frederic to a ſenſe

a ſenſe of duty that muſt have ſhaken off the chains of vice, which almoſt in ſpite of inclination held him enſlaved.

Berners ſcarcely gave himſelf time to peruſe Mrs. Stanhope's letter, before he tore open that of Gertrude; but this, by no means, gratified his curioſity, as it contained nothing but ſiſterly tenderneſs, intermingled with ſome ſelf reflections; though, without entering into particulars; that convinced him that he had loſt the power which he once flattered himſelf he held over her heart.

His pride wounded by this idea, he threw the letter from him, exclaiming, "curſed jilt, emblem of the whole ſex; 'tis Montgomery has cauſed this revolution; his infernal prying temper has doubtleſs diſcovered ſomething reſpecting Southern.—She, however, could tell no tales. Yet," continued he, after a pauſe; "perhaps ſome of my letters might be found, which no doubt he would turn to his advantage."

A double knock at the ſtreet-door broke

broke on his contemplations, and not doubting it was Frederic, he haſtily put up the letters, and went to meet him.

Berners fraud paſſed unſuſpected, and though Frederic in his reflective moments frequently wondered at his ſiſter's ſilence, yet he attributed it ſolely to Mrs. Stanhope, whoſe anger he figured to himſelf as implacable; and though he would have given worlds to have learned news reſpecting Marian and Montgomery, whoſe ſituation he was totally uninformed of, yet pride forbade his aſking queſtions, or again writing to his ſiſter, as he ſuppoſed his laſt, though conciliatory, and written with anguiſh, had not as yet procured him an anſwer.

CHAPTER XI.

A JAUNT BACK TO DORSETSHIRE.

THOUGH Gertrude was for a conſiderable time abaſhed and deeply wounded with the remembrance of the paſt, yet the kindneſs of Mrs. Stanhope and the unwearied aſſiduities of Marian began to diſpel the gloom, and by degrees ſhe mingled with more ſatisfaction in the parties formed between the family at Blackwood, and that at the Vale.

The diſpoſal of time was ſo different from what Gertrude had ever been accuſtomed to, that ſhe was perpetually employed; and ſhe ſaw with admiration her aunt and Marian conſtantly engaged in

in ſome humane or praiſe-worthy action, though without the affectation of feelings that exiſt only in fiction.

To be merely a ſpectator was not conſonant with the temper of Gertrude, however miſled by education; ſhe began to take an active part in their purſuits, and by thinking more of others, inſenſibly thought leſs of herſelf: with Marian, as with Mrs. Stanhope, ſhe had no concealments, but the preſence of Albert was ſtill a reſtraint upon her, for though ſhe reſpected him, ſhe could not loſe the idea that he was acquainted with her folly.—That ſhe received no anſwer to the letter ſhe had written to her brother gave her conſiderable uneaſineſs, particularly as Mrs. Stanhope inſiſted that his ſilence could only proceed from his approbation of Berners duplicity. "My fears," ſaid that lady, "are now confirmed, and I will endeavour to forget our relationſhip; had he poſſeſſed the ſmalleſt ſpark of honour, ſuch villany muſt have blown it to a flame,

but 'tis now paſt all doubt that he was privy to Berners obtaining the written promiſe; and ſhame, or ſome ſiniſter motive keeps him ſilent. I am however glad that I alſo wrote to him, as he can hereafter have no excuſe to plead, and in the mean time muſt intreat Gertrude, that you write no more until ſome anſwer ſhall be returned that may lead us to judge of their future ſchemes."

Gertrude, however, attached to her brother, could not refute this opinion; and felt too much gratitude to her aunt not to make the promiſe ſhe required.

Among the whole groupe, not one was ſo diſſatisfied as the Colonel, he ardently wiſhed to bring about an union between Albert and Gertrude, but the behaviour of the firſt gave him no hopes of love; and that of the latter was ſo timid, that he concluded all his wiſhes would be unavailing; they were however not patiently relinquiſhed, Montgomery receiving daily ſome petulant lectures, all of which were anſwered with

with a cheerfulneſs and good humour, that never failed to diſarm his uncle's anger.

The omiſſions in Gertrude's education, it was Mrs. Stanhope's moſt aſſiduous care to rectify, nor was ſhe indifferently ſeconded by Marian; though her inſtructions were given with ſo much eaſe and friendſhip, that Gertrude felt herſelf improved and gratified without humiliation.

Though her favourite romantic taſte in reading ſtill continued, yet the ſtudy of muſic and drawing employed ſo much of her time, that it was frequently neglected; and as ſhe improved rapidly, a wiſh of excelling made her doubly aſſiduous, ſo that Mrs. Stanhope would often laughingly ſay, "my dear Gertrude you grow unpardonably unfeeling, for on opening your book, I find by the mark, that you left your heroine in a moſt perilous ſituation, and paſt all hope of human ſuccour; you were not accuſtomed to be ſo cruel."

Gertrude,

Gertrude, who had now no fear of her aunt, uſually anſwered in the ſame manner. "Indeed, Madam, I humbly beg her pardon, but ſomething more momentous tore me away, and that willingly; as I had not the moſt diſtant fear but that ſome extraordinary event would interpoſe, or valorous hero appear at the laſt extremity to her reſcue."

Marian and Gertrude alternately read to Mrs. Stanhope in the evening, when they were without company, and thus, by inſenſibly drawing Gertrude's ideas into another channel, Mrs. Stanhope had the pleaſure to contemplate that in all probability ſhe ſhould be able to form her to her moſt ardent wiſhes. In the mean time the Colonel had been buſied in the improvement and alteration of his eſtate, which being nearly finiſhed, he entreated Mrs. Stanhope and the young ladies to direct the internal decorations; but as theſe could not be furniſhed in the country, it was at length agreed that Marian ſhould accompany him to Lon-

don to make the neceſſary ſelection. A few days previous to their departure, Gertrude being alone with her aunt, and Marian addreſſing the former, ſhe ſaid, with ſome confuſion, "I have a favour to beg my dear Madam, though I confeſs I feel diſtreſſed to aſk it, as it muſt recal to your memory what I would wiſh to obliterate from it for ever."

Mrs. Stanhope's only reply was an affectionate ſalute, and taking her niece's hand, ſhe waited in ſilence to hear her requeſt.

"It is," ſaid Gertrude, bluſhing, and caſting down her eyes, "in behalf of poor Miſs Southern: Oh, Madam, how much do I owe her; her unhappy ſtory firſt baniſhed the deluſion under which I laboured; and indeed I don't think I ever could enjoy happineſs was ſhe not ſecured from want. Miſs Montgomery has ſhewn me one of Mrs. Moſely's letters: ſhe ſpeaks of her in the moſt reſpectable terms, and ſays her health is greatly reſtored:—her misforune," continued

tinued ſhe, a deeper crimſon colouring her cheek, "was almoſt involuntary, and her imprudence far inferior to mine: ſhe regarded Berners as a man who loved and would raiſe her to a rank which her mother could not fail to approve when informed of it; while I with equally unpardonable concealment, knew that however my parents might approve him as a tutor, ſuch an alliance muſt have eſtranged us for ever."

"My dear Gertrude," interrupted Mrs. Stanhope, ſmiling, "you ſaid your requeſt was in behalf of Miſs Southern, and you are talking about yourſelf."

The gentleneſs of this reply which Gertrude plainly underſtood to preclude herſelf accuſation, over powered her, and ſtruggling a moment with her emotion, ſhe continued, "Miſs Montgomery means to offer Mrs. Moſely the management of the Colonel's houſehold, which is his own requeſt; poor Betſey will then have a new ſituation to ſeek; though I am not to learn that the gene-

roſity of Mr. Montgomery and Marian will ſtill befriend her; yet as I want ſome one immediately about my perſon, I ſhould be happy to offer her that ſituation."

"Have you conſidered that though ſhe is acquainted with the name of Gertrude St. Auſtyn, yet ſhe thinks the pape Berners ſhewed her a forgery? but your conduct will make it appear otherwiſe."

"Indeed, Madam," replied Gertrude, "ſhe ſeems to poſſeſs ſo grateful a heart, that I ſhould not heſitate to tell her the truth."

"If it were to anſwer any proper purpoſe, ſilence would be folly; but as it can only gratify curioſity, I hold it as well to let the ſubject paſs without explanation. Mrs. Moſely I am convinced is a good character; ſhe is accuſtomed to, and partial to Miſs Southern; and as an aſſiſtant will be undoubtedly neceſſary to her as houſekeeper to the Colonel. I think it a very eligible ſituation,

as

as ſhe will ſtill remain immediately under her care: we ſhall then frequently ſee her, and be able to judge of her merits, and believe me, Gertrude, if deſerving, ſhe ſhall neither want my countenance nor protection."

Miſs St. Auſtyn and Marian had only time to expreſs their ſatisfaction at this arrangement, when the Colonel and Montgomery were announced. After the common ſalutations, Mrs. Stanhope informed them of the wiſh they had been expreſſing of being ſerviceable to Miſs Southern, of whom, the Colonel knew nothing, farther than that his nephew had ſaved her from drowning; he however immediately acquieſced, and Montgomery replied—

"I cannot ſay but that I ſhall be happy to have her placed in ſecurity, and as ſhe will ſtill remain under the guidance of Mrs. Moſely, I am convinced it will be eligible for her."

"Well, ſaid *Prudence*," interrupted the

Colonel, with his accuſtomed bluntneſs, "I'll anſwer for it, that let her be beautiful as Venus, ſhe'll be as ſafe at Blackwood, even without Mrs. Moſely, as in a Siſter-hood of Nuns—*Joſeph* here," ſlapping Montgomery on the back, "would never have reduced St. Urſula and her eleven thouſand virgins to cut off their noſes; he would not heſitate to leave his robe behind in his flight from temptation."

"My good Sir," returned Mrs. Stanhope, with difficulty repreſſing a ſmile, and not appearing to notice the Colonel's manner, "I believe my young friend merits your praiſe, but we will ſpare him as he is preſent."

"Praiſe, egad I meant no ſuch thing; I deteſt a libertine, for I regard him as the peſt of ſociety, whom no honour can hold, if ſelf gratification interferes; yet, notwithſtanding this, Madam, I would not have a young fellow a mere diſciple of Zeno, a Stoic, as inſenſible

to

to the power of beauty, as the marble figure on his great grandfather's monument."

"My dear uncle," interrupted Montgomery, laughing, "when did I ſhew this inſenſibility? am I not always ready to allow merit and beauty wherever I find them?"

"Obſerve, Madam, obſerve," ſaid the Colonel, "to ſhew his inſenſibility, the rogue has named merit firſt. Yes, Sir, I allow that you frequently ſpeak of both with apparent rapture; but what of that, 'tis merely as ſome chaps admire and cheapen pictures, to be thought connoiſſeurs, without intention to buy."

"But my brother, my dear uncle, does intend to *buy* one of theſe days," ſaid Marian archly, "he only waits to *lay out his heart* to the beſt advantage."

"You are a coaxing gipſy," anſwered the Colonel, patting her cheek, "and I am convinced have a more ſuſceptible heart than his; therefore remember what I ſay, keep a tight watch over it, that

it does not ſteal out at your eyes before you are aware."

"Did I deſerve this for taking Albert's part?" ſaid Marian, laughing.

"Perhaps not," returned the Colonel, "you are a good girl, and I love you dearly; but for your brother, he would provoke a ſaint; he knows I wiſh to ſee him married, but neither my threats or entreaties have any power. God forgive me! I once threatened to get married myſelf if he would not, but it had no effect; and the day after to try the oppoſite extreme, I offered to ſettle two-thirds of my fortune on him, but it was ſtill the ſame; and now to leave him no excuſe, I here before his friend Mrs. Stanhope repeat my propoſal with this emendation, that as I am reſolved to live and to die with him, to make over my whole property to him on the day of his marriage."

"Then," replied Montgomery with warmth, "will I never marry at all.—To be dependent on you, Sir, is at once

once my duty and pride, and the woman who cannot reſolve to ſhare that dependance, ſhall never ſhare my heart."

"Hang the fellow; I believe he does it on purpoſe to—to——Pray, Madam employ him ſomehow or other for a ſhort time, I ſhall not bear to look at him this half hour."

Albert roſe to leave the room, when Mrs. Stanhope addreſſing her niece and Marian, ſaid, "my good girls pray accompany Mr. Montgomery in his baniſhments; a little muſic will, I am ſure, be agreeable; and for the Colonel and myſelf, we will follow ſpeedily.

CHAPTER XII.

ADVICE.

THE Colonel was no ſooner ſeated, than Mrs. Stanhope addreſſing him, ſaid, "Forgive me, Sir, if now we are alone, I uſe the liberty of friendſhip and cenſure your conduct.—"Why will you preſs your nephew to haſten into a ſtate that requires the utmoſt reflection? To ſuppoſe that he has an averſion to marriage, becauſe he refuſes to enter into it raſhly, you cannot credit in your calmer moments; on the contrary, it muſt neceſſarily increaſe your eſtimation of his character, as it proves it totally diſintereſted. He is yet very young, and has doubtleſs never ſeen the woman that he

could wiſh to paſs his life with; and would you require him to make a choice which he might repent in a month, and drag through a ſlavery of years with a woman different from him in temper and purſuits?——Believe me, my good Colenel, your whole fortune, however large, could not compenſate ſuch a ſacrifice. Leave the buſineſs to time without interference, and ſhould he make a choice, and it even prove not quite ſatisfactory, at leaſt you could not accuſe yourſelf of having occaſioned it."

"True, Madam, in that caſe I ſhould indeed be the moſt unhappy dog in the world, but I was ſecure from that, for the lady I had choſen—"

"Choſen?" interrupted Mrs. Stanhope; "bleſs me, Colonel! I had no idea you had gone ſo far."

"Indeed but I had, Madam; and now I am about it, may as well confeſs the truth, for I know you will keep my ſecret, which I muſt requeſt, or I could not again face the young lady.—When Miſs

St. Auſtyn firſt came hither, as I mean to give him my whole fortune, I thought if they could like one another, it would be no bad buſineſs. I call Heaven to witneſs that her fortune had no ſway with me, I have ſufficient for both; herſelf was the recommendation, and being your niece, increaſed her value with me, as I knew it would alſo with Albert; I therefore loſt no time, but mentioned it to him.—I ſpoke in her praiſe, he more than echoed me, but talked of her fortune meeting a refuſal; and in ſhort, I know not what—though I offered to make propoſals to you that I truſted would not be refuſed. He however, declined all, and I fear I muſt give up my intention."

"And now, Colonel, to deal with equal ſincerity, I muſt tell you, that Mr. Montgomery has acted with more prudence than yourſelf.—His acquaintance with Gertrude is too ſhort for either to judge decidedly whether the other is calculated to make them happy; Gertrude is yet

young, and her character muſt be more fixed before I ſhould willingly conſent to ſee her married."

"Albert, I am convinced, would make any woman happy," interrupted the Colonel, warmly.

"I believe it; and as I can rely on your honour, will not ſcruple one declaration, which is, that I ſhould not heſitate had I a daughter, to beſtow her on your nephew. But my ſituation with Gertrude is far more delicate, as her whole fortune depends on my conſent. I may adviſe if I ſee her chooſe imprudently, but will never perſuade or recommend any party: I have remarked, among young people, recommendations are ſeldom of ſervice; beſide, to influence any one I regard as dependent on my conſent, is an action of all others I would avoid. Be perſuaded by me then, Sir, and leave your nephew to his own inclination; talk to him no more on the buſineſs; and above all, let me entreat

entreat that our preſent converſation may never be diſcloſed."

"No, on my honour and life, it never ſhall, though it would warm my poor Albert's heart to know your goodneſs. I yield to your better judgement, I will preſs the ſubject no farther; if he marries, it will make me happy, if he declines it, I will endeavour to be ſatisfied."

"Right, my dear Sir, and now let us go and offer a flag of truce: I am convinced that you love you nephew, and feel equally with himſelf any little difference of opinion that may ariſe."

With theſe words, Mrs. Stanhope preſented her hand to the Colonel, who led her to the muſic room.

The trio was apparently in high good humour; Marian had taken her place at the harpſichord, and entreated Gertrude to ſing a little air ſhe was accuſtomed to, but there was now a reſtraint ſhe could not eaſily overcome, the preſence of Montgomery. Marian however laughed

at

at her ſcruples, adding, "Surely you do not mind Albert? If you do he ſhall a ſecond time ſuffer baniſhment."

"In this caſe," ſaid Montgomery, "I ſhall not ſubmit ſo calmly. In the firſt inſtance I was ſentenced by one whoſe power I had no right to diſpute; and Mrs. Stanhope, merciful to my errors, gave me ſuch companions in my exile, as ſhe knew would intirely deſtroy its effect."

"If this puniſhment has ſo little power upon you," replied Marian, "I ſhall deſire my uncle to contrive ſome more efficacious."

"With all my heart, provided Miſs St. Auſtyn favour us now with the air you mentioned.—Surely," ſaid he to Gertrude, humouroufly, adopting Marian's words, "*You do not mind Albert?*"

Gertrude thus preſſed, ſung, but not ſo well as uſual, and on the concluſion, apologized to Marian, who accompanied her with the harpſichord. Albert in his turn both ſung and played, and thus were

were the party employed when the Colonel and Mrs. Stanhope entered.

"You ſee, Madam, that my anger has no great effect on my nephew."

"It has all the effect you wiſh it, my dear Sir," replied Montgomery, riſing and placing chairs for Mrs. Stanhope and his uncle: "few calamities would oppreſs me equal to that of deſerving your diſpleaſure; but for trifling differences of opinion, I cannot remember them longer than you do."

"Egad, its true that I never remember them long; your friend too here has been ſpeaking a good word for you, ſo let what is paſt be forgotten, die a bachelor if you will, I care not; ſhould I live to be as old as my father, we ſhall be entertaining companions by a winter's fire ſide."

"I do not intend to die a bachelor if I can help it;" replied Montgomery, "when I can meet with a woman who has a heart to beſtow, and good nature enough to bear with ſuch a help-mate,

I, with

I, with your approbation, will take her by the hand for life. To confeſs the truth, I have a daſh of the romantic in my notions of matrimonial happineſs; I have a heart to love ſincerely, and will not bate a grain of being as well beloved in return."

"Oh! you unreaſonable creature," retured Marian; "can you ſuppoſe that if even a woman had a partiality for you, that ſhe would confeſs it."

"I did not ſtipulate for words," ſaid Albert; "but why ſhould ſhe not? ſurely there is no ſhame in virtuous love, and for ſuch a woman I would declare my affection in the face of God and man."

"I have always obſerved," ſaid the Colonel, "that your demure dogs are the moſt impudent fellows. I honeſtly confeſs that in my youth my morals in ſome reſpects were not ſo irreproachable as I could now wiſh; but hang me, amidſt it all, I ſhould never have had face enough to aſk a girl to ſay ſhe loved me."

"Indeed,"

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Stanhope, "you have got into a curious diſpute, Colonel, and which I think will take from your nephew the ſubject of your reproach."

"Egad, Madam, he's a queer compound, yet take him altogether, I muſt bear with him, for I know not how to alter him for the better."

"He muſt therefore remain as he is," replied Mrs. Stanhope; "we will at preſent adjourn to the tea table, and afterwards paſs the intervening time until ſupper, with muſic."

CHAPTER XIII.

A JOURNEY TO LONDON.

IN a few days, as before agreed, the Colonel and Marian, departed for London, Montgomery remaining at Blackwood to ſuperintend the buſineſs that was yet, unfiniſhed. On their arrival in town, Mrs. Moſely's lodgings being empty, they took up their reſidence with her, as their ſtay was to be ſhort. The offer of the Colonel to Mrs. Moſely, to accampany them home as houſe-keeper, the good woman accepted with heart-felt ſatisfaction, as ſhe looked upon ſuch a retreat as an aſylum for old age, which was faſt creeping upon her.

With

With the appearance of Miſs Southern, both Marian and her uncle were intereſted; her mind, by the care of Mrs. Moſely, had become much calmer, and her perſon in conſequence had improved ſo greatly, that the Colonel, when alone with his niece, ſaid—"Egad, I did not expect the wench was ſo handſome, and though I believe Albert to be as well, or perhaps better to be truſted than moſt young fellows, yet I don't hold it prudent to throw temptation in his way. I ſhould be plaguily provoked to have any miſchief happen, and confounded angry with him, yet at his age I proteſt I don't think I could have withſtood ſuch an adventure."

"My dear Sir," anſwered Marian, "I thought you had a better opinion of Albert, I know his heart and can anſwer for—"

"What can you anſwer for you little ſimpleton?" interrupted the Colonel; "what do you know of the matter? His heart, why his heart would have nothing

to

to do in the buſineſs. What the pies, don't I underſtand theſe things better than you?"

This reply completely ſilenced Marian, which the Colonel obſerving, he added—"Come, never be grave, I love you for your opinion of your brother; but don't think ſo well of any other man; we are all confounded fly where a pretty girl's concerned, and ſhould any one hereafter win your affections, and not deſerve the preference, hang me, as old as I am, if I would not hunt him through the earth like a wild beaſt."

"Were I to beſtow my heart imprudently, your danger, Sir, could but increaſe my puniſhment; but with the bleſſing of heaven, I truſt neither you nor I ſhall he put to the trial."

When Marian mentioned to Betſey Southern her accompanying them into the country, her gratitude knew no bounds; but, when ſhe was informed that it was to Miſs St. Auſtyn ſhe had diſcloſed her whole ſtory, it was a conſiderable

conſiderable drawback on her pleaſure Marian, however, avoided explanation, leaving her ſtill in error reſpecting the forgery. As ſhe became more acquainted with Betſey, ſhe found her mild and unaſſuming, ready to oblige, and unwearied in ſhewing her gratitude; ſhe had the more time for theſe obſervations as the Colonel was frequently engaged with an old acquaintantance he had accidently met with at his bankers, ſo that had it not been for the company of Mrs. Moſely and Betſey, ſhe would have been much alone.

One morning, after breakfaſt, as ſhe was reading the newſpaper, ſhe happened caſually to expreſs a wiſh to ſee a play advertiſed for that evening. The Colonel ready to gratify her moſt trivial wiſhes, deſired ſhe would take the preſent opportunity. "The ſervant," ſaid he, "ſhall take places, Mrs. Moſely will accompany you, and by the end of the play, I ſhall be able to join you."

Marian

Marian accepted the propoſal; and in the evening, with her friend, went to the theatre, which was much crowded; and the lobby ſo full, that they found ſome difficulty in paſſing. Marian, though no word eſcaped her, determined never to enter a theatre again without a male protector; for the beauty of her perſon attracted the attention of the loungers, who, regardleſs of the confuſion they inſpired, fixed their glaſſes on her with unfeeling curioſity, rapping out with faſhionable oaths encomiums on her lovelineſs. Taking Mrs. Moſely's arm, her eyes fixed on the ground, they had nearly got through the lobby, when an exclamation from one of her tormentors attracted her attention. "Zounds, St. Auſtyn," ſaid he, "what are you doing, have you ſeen the conſtellation?" Marian at the name involuntarily raiſed her eyes, and to her great confuſion, diſcovered among the party that obſtructed their paſſage, Frederic St. Auſtyn, in earneſt

earneſt diſcourſe with a woman of elegant appearance. As his back was nearly turned towards her, ſhe had hopes ſhe ſhould paſs unnoticed; and particularly as he anſwered the coxcomb that addreſſed him. "I leave you the benefit of the diſcovery, I am otherwiſe engaged;" then converſing for a moment with the lady, whoſeh and he held, Marian heard her ſay—"you will not fail," to which he anſwered, "the challenge is too delightful to be neglected."

At that moment the croud preſſing, Mrs. Moſely was forced towards them; when Frederic turned his eyes and met thoſe of Marian. The levity of his manner inſtantly forſook him—he ſtarted, dropped the hand he was apparently preſſing, and puſhed through the croud in purſuit of Marian, who had juſt paſſed the party that obſtructed the way.

Though confuſed with the remembrance of what had paſſed between Albert and himſelf, yet he was too much intereſted

eſted to ſuffer her to eſcape him; and therefore followed them to a box, which he a few moments after entered.

"Pardon this intruſion, Miſs Montgomery," ſaid he, "but with fortune ſo much my friend, it was impoſſible to reſiſt the opportunity."

Marian made no reply, but endeavoured to conceal her vexation at the rencontre by converſing with Mrs. Moſely. "Will you not deign to ſpeak to me, Miſs Montgomery?—Surely you will favour me by informing me of the health of my aunt?"

"Mrs. Stanhope was well, Sir," returned Marian coldly, "when I laſt heard from her."

"*From her!* you aſtoniſh me," ſaid Frederic, "may I aſk if you have left my aunt, Madam?"

"For a ſhort time, Sir."

Frederic looked inquiſitive, but ventured no further queſtion; the extreme coldneſs both of Marian's manner, and anſwers, precluded all information.

"I did myſelf the honour, Madam," reſumed he, after a long pauſe—"to addreſs a letter to you ſome time ſince; would to Heaven my offers had met your approbation!"

"I thank you, Sir, my ſituation is ſo happy, I do not wiſh to change it."

"I cannot grieve at your happineſs," returned Frederic in a melancholy accent, "though I may wiſh I had been ſuffered to contribute towards it. Unfortunately, an error which I ſincerely lament, though I cannot recall it, has rendered me ſo deſpicable in your opinion, that nothing can remove the impreſſion."

"Like yourſelf," replied Marian, ſomewhat ſoftened by his apparent contrition, "I lament that you ſhould deviate ſo greatly from what I flatter myſelf is your natural character; but this on your *own* account—for even *that* event totally obliterated from my memory, Mr. St. Auſtyn and myſelf could never be more than friends."

"Why

"Why will you ſay ſo?" replied Frederic. "If the ſincereſt contrition, the trueſt admiration of your virtues, and moſt unalterable affection can obliterate my faults, believe them fixed in my heart. I am a young man, Miſs Montgomery, errors at my age may not be irretrieveable; an unhappy number of unavoidable circumſtances have combined to force me to act in a manner repugnant to my feelings. I confeſs I have not that command over my paſſions which diſtinguiſhes your brother; and ſincerely lament the folly and diſgrace of our late rencontre."

"*Rencontre!*" repeated Marian with viſible alarm, the ſecrecy ſhe had obſerved when the Colonel and Albert firſt came to the Vale recurring to her memory. "Can you then have been ſo cruel as to force Albert to meet you? 'Tis a circumſtance he has carefully concealed, even from me. Leave me, Sir, leave me, I conjure you; the injuries to myſelf I forgive, but the wickedneſs of wiſh-

ing to deprive me of my neareſt friend and protector, I never can forget or pardon."

Frederic, ſincerely vexed that he had mentioned the ſubject, which Marian's emotion convinced him ſhe was before ignorant of, ſaid, "For Heaven's ſake ſuppreſs your reſentment! Hear me; though I cannot exculpate, at leaſt I can palliate my conduct."

"Leave me, leave me, Sir," anſwered ſhe, endeavouring to ſpeak with more calmneſs. "This diſagreeable diſcourſe will attract notice; if you do not inſtantly go, I will quit the houſe."

Frederic finding her peremptory was neceſſitated to acquieſce, and riſing ſaid, "Painful as is your command, you ſhall be obeyed. Ah! Miſs Montgomery, I would you could ſee my heart! My errors are indeed great, but my puniſhment is equally ſo." Thus ſpeaking, he bowed, and left the box, but went no further than the back row in the next, where he at leaſt could ſee what paſſed.

Marian then informed Mrs. Moſely with the reaſons for her conduct, concluding with ſaying, "Were it not for my uncle's coming, and that our abſence might alarm him, I would immediately return home, for the pleaſure of the evening is entirely deſtroyed." The drawing up of the curtain prevented more diſcourſe; but as Marian had ſaid the amuſement of the evening was totally broken in upon, ſhe was inattentive to all before her; her thoughts reverting to the danger her brother had doubtleſs eſcaped; or what in future he might be expoſed to—withdrawing her eyes whenever they chanced to glance towards Frederic, (who ſat between her and the ſtage) as though they had met a ſerpent. Though the houſe was uncommonly full, Mrs. Moſely had reſerved a place for the Colonel, who at the end of the fourth act entered the box, and took his ſeat by the ſide of Marian, who made him room with apparent ſatisfaction. "My dear girl," ſaid he aloud, "my heart

has been with you the whole evening; I fear you were incommoded getting in, and condemned myſelf ſince your departure, for truſting you."

The whole of this ſpeech reached the aſtoniſhed ear of Frederic; Marian's anſwer was in a low voice, yet the words *dear Sir* were diſtinguiſhable, and ſtung him to the quick. Yet when he conſidered the age of the Colonel, his jealouſy would have ſubſided, had he not recogniſed him for the perſon who attended Albert the morning of their meeting, and whoſe interference the night before had marked his deteſtation of Berners' behaviour. Again he recollected his ſaying that he was a ſtranger to Albert, but would ſecond ſo brave a fellow to the laſt drop of his blood. To complete all, the Colonel had the appearance of a buck of the laſt age; and it ſeemed very improbable that the old gentleman ſhould be on ſuch terms of intimacy with Marian, and yet ſhe be totally uninformed of the meeting that had taken place.

Thus

Thus circumſtanced, he paſſed a diſagreeable evening; nor was Marian's more pleaſing, though the preſence of her uncle in ſome meaſure reaſſured her, and ſhe endeavoured to receive his ſallies and obſervations with cheerfulneſs; until Frederic, unable to bear his vexation, without in ſome meaſure ſhewing it, roſe haſtily, and left the box, without being ſeen by the Colonel, who, totally ingroſſed by his niece, ſcarcely thought of any other object.

Frederic, though he was determined at the moment he left his ſeat to return inſtantly home and forget Marian, whoſe connection with the Colonel he ſaw in no very favourable point of view, had hardly reached the lobby before he blamed his own precipitancy, and reſolved at leaſt to keep a watch on her actions for that evening; he therefore returned, but placed himſelf at a greater diſtance, and in a ſituation where he conjectured ſhe could not diſcover him.

On his re-entrance Marian's eyes were

fixed on the Colonel's face, ſhe was apparently liſtening to him with a pleaſure that redoubled Frederic's torments: after ſuffering, during the whole of the farce, he ſaw them riſe to depart, and determined if poſſible to diſcover whether her old beau accompanied her home, and where ſhe reſided.

At length they left the box, and Frederic unſeen in the crowd followed to the lobby; where to his increaſed vexation, he ſaw her familiarly hang on the old gentleman, and heard him ſay in a loud and peremptory tone, as they reached the door, "I inſiſt on your tying that cat-ſkin cloſer round your throat, or you will take cold, and I have not time to nurſe you while we are in town." Marian inſtantly obeyed by bringing her tippet cloſe to her neck, then again placing her arm under his, when the Colonel, to Frederic's ſtill greater amazement, in a loud voice deſired Miſs Montgomery's ſervant to be called; and in a few minutes ſaw an elegant though plain coach draw

draw up, into which, after placing the ladies, he ſtepped himſelf.

"Do you ſee that coach?" ſaid Frederic to one of the link-boys, as it drove off ſlowly, being impeded by other carriages; "follow, obſerve where it ſtops, and every circumſtance, then bring me word to the Shakeſpear, where I ſhall wait for you—my name is St. Auſtyn, be diligent, and I will reward you."

No more was neceſſary; the lad darted off with ſpeed, followed through thick and thin, never loſing ſight of the coach until he ſaw it reach Mrs. Moſely's.

The ſtreet and ſhop being carefully noted, the lad returned to his employer, who was waiting with impatience,

"Well, Sir," ſaid he, "I have landed them ſafe at No. 12, a Milliner's ſhop in Duke-ſtreet; I put out my link becauſe I ſhould not be remarked, but lighted it again at an oyſter ſtand, when I ſaw them ſtop; and by good luck got cloſe before they ſtepped out—"Light your honour," ſays I, as the old gentleman

was helping out the eldeſt lady, and when he gave his hand to the other, I held up my link and ſaw her face as plain as I do yours; and 'faith, a ſweet face it is, and a good-natured one too, 'tis a thouſand pities but a younger man could catch her."

"Catch her!" repeated Frederic indignantly; but ſuddenly checking himſelf on the recollection that the ſervice in which he had employed this lad paved the way to familiarity, he aſked more calmly, if all went into the ſame houſe.

"Lauk, Sir, I was going to tell you, perhaps the young lady was his wife; I'm glad I followed them, I'm ſure. He bid me hold down my link, for fear ſhe ſhould ſlip off the ſtep, and when ſhe was ſafe, ſaid, "If you have any ſilver, my love, give this poor fellow a ſhilling, for I have no change;" which ſhe did in a moment, telling the old gentleman, as they went into the houſe, that ſhe was glad they had got ſafe home.

"Enough," returned Frederic; giving

ing him ſome ſilver—" I have all the information I want."

For ſome time after the fellow's departure, Frederic remained loſt in thought. That Marian was not married was paſt all doubt; for the old gentleman called for *Miſs* Montgomery's ſervants; but how came Miſs Montgomery to be enabled to keep ſervants? who had but a few months before been reduced to ſeek a ſervice; and her brother confined to a priſon for a ſmall debt. The new acquaintance too, who behaved, and in return was treated, with ſuch familiarity, appeared in no favourable light; and to complete all, Mrs. Moſely came in for her ſhare of the ſcandal. Such were the firſt thoughts that recurred; but a ſhort reflection appeared to refute them—" Confuſion," exclaimed he; " 'tis impoſſible, have not I offered her the diſpoſal of my fortune, and even to make her my wife on any terms? 'Tis a curſed humiliating reflection to ſuppoſe ſhe can prefer that ugly old raſcal to

myſelf. By my ſoul, Berners' opinion of the ſex is juſt: this old fellow's fortune is doubtleſs eaſier than mine; he perhaps means to marry her, and ſhe poſſibly may prudently conſider that her bondage will be of ſhorter duration, and that ſuch a huſband will be more commodious than myſelf; but where is her brother in all this? where is his quick ſenſe of honour, to ſuffer his ſiſter to act thus?—he muſt be equally guilty."

Such were Frederic's vague conjectures; but unable to form any that relieved his anxiety, he at length ordered the waiter to call a coach, and returned home.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TORMENTS OF JEALOUSY.

AS Berners was not within when Frederic returned, he retired to his apartment; but the perturbation of his ſpirits baniſhed ſleep. He had begun to flatter himſelf that he had overcome his paſſion for Marian; but this chance meeting deſtroyed the illuſion, and like chaff before the wind, his reſolution of forgetting her fled. He turned with diſguſt from the woman he was addreſſing with the warmeſt gallantry, and, regardleſs of every other object, purſued her, experiencing the moſt poignant pangs of jealouſy at ſight of the Colonel, whoſe intimacy

timacy he accounted for in the moſt infamous manner, for the opinions of Berners could not intirely fail of their impreſſion.

Determined however to ſearch the myſtery to the bottom, he endeavoured to compoſe himſelf, but in vain; every word and action that had ſtruck his ear from either the Colonel or Marian, recurred with redoubled acrimony on his mind the more they were reflected upon; even the ſmile with which ſhe received him, her manner of making him place, trifling as they were, increaſed his torment — "*Dear Sir*," exclaimed he, repeating her addreſs to the Colonel.—"The depravity of woman is yet greater than I imagined—youth, beauty, and accompliſhments, to unite themſelves to age, uglineſs, and lechery; the thought renders her hateful and diſguſting, ſhe is paſt all ſhame, or ſhe could not act thus; to hang familiarly on his arm, to ſuffer him to addreſs her with ſo much freedom, all evinces their connection

nection—"*Tie that cat-ſkin cloſer round your neck, I ſhall not have time to nurſe you.*"—Confound him! I wonder, public as the place was, the old goat did not tye it himſelf.——By Heaven! if he had, I believe I ſhould have ſtrangled him upon the ſpot. Fool that I am, to diſtract my brain with ſo worthleſs an object, I will endeavour to loſe the remembrance in ſleep." —— A calm of ſome minutes ſucceeded, when ſuddenly ſtarting he continued—"*Miſs Montgomery's ſervants!* Oh Marian! how much more lovely were you when you offered yourſelf as an attendant on my mother!—Time *was* when you might have diſpoſſeſſed me of all my errors, and led me back to rectitude and happineſs, and I have preſerved you in honour and innocence; but it is too late to reflect, the fate of both is fixed.—Yet," continued he, after a long pauſe, "without vanity, it almoſt exceeds belief, that ſhe ſhould prefer that old fellow. Berners' accurſed quarrel at the coffee-houſe doubtleſs brought

brought Montgomery acquainted with him, for that they were then ſtrangers was apparent. Her brother appears a man of rigid honour, and can he ſubmit to this? After all, ſurely I muſt miſtake—eyes, ears, all conſpire to deceive me, ſhe *cannot* be his miſtreſs; yet it muſt be through him that her ſituation is ſo much changed. Probably he means to marry her, but he ſhall firſt cut his way through my heart to the altar."

Overpowered at length with his own violence, a calmer ſtate of mind ſucceeded, and he ſincerely repented the not having again written to Gertrude, an omiſſion that however he reſolved to rectify in the enſuing morning.

Frederic aroſe with his ſpirits calmed, but unrecruited by reſt, and to Berners' preſſing entreaties at length diſcloſed the meeting of the night before. He liſtened to the account with more pleaſure than amazement, as it coincided with his opinion of women.

"You

"You will ſurely now have no compunction," ſaid he; "I knew from the firſt, that her conduct was merely art to enhance her value."

Though Frederic, influenced by jealouſy, at firſt gave ſomewhat into this ſentiment, yet it was preponderated by ſo many ſtrong circumſtances, that reflection made him waver.

"Were ſhe what in honour I could call my wife," ſaid he, "there is nothing even yet that I would not attempt to gain her; but as it is, my word ſhall bind me—I give her up for ever."

"Heroically reſolved; and ſo let the old fellow triumph. No, though I ſincerely wiſh the girl had been ſnugly lying by the ſide of her great grandmother before ever you ſaw her, for I am convinced the remembrance of her imbitters all your pleaſures; yet, now to be foiled by an old fellow! to ſtand by calmly and let him bear off the prize for which you languiſh; forbid it honour, and forbid it love!"

"Leave

"Leave honour out of the queſtion," ſaid Frederic; "ſuppoſing me even inclined to follow your advice, I cannot conceive it poſſible, for I am convinced that even the ſight of a ſerpent is not ſo hateful to her as my preſence."

"Ridiculous!" replied Berners, "is it in nature to ſuppoſe that ſhe can prefer an old ugly fellow to a young handſome one? But you ſay ſhe is at the milliner Moſely's; I will therefore endeavour to make ſome inquiries reſpecting her this morning."

"For Heaven's ſake refrain!" replied Frederic, "I dread your farther interference; I know your friendſhip for me would lead you any length; but after what has paſſed between myſelf and Montgomery, I hold myſelf bound in honour, and cannot bear the reflection of a renewal of inſult. I mean this day to write to Gertrude; Mrs. Stanhope, ſurely, cannot ſo far influence her as to break off all correſpondence with her brother; I will ſlightly mention having

ſeen

ſeen Miſs Montgomery, which may lead to ſome reply that may develope her preſent ſituation."

Writing to either his aunt or Gertrude was what Berners dreaded; yet it was impoſſible to make any objection, without appearing particular; he therefore determined to remain at home and take meaſures to get the letter into his poſſeſſion; this was effected without difficulty, for in the courſe of the morning Frederic having written, left his letter with orders to be ſent to the poſt, and went to take his uſual ride—an opportunity Berners did not fail to profit by, telling the ſervant he would put it in with one of his own.

CHAPTER XV.

INQUIRIES.

ACTIVE as Berners appeared tó ſerve his pupil in his illicit pleaſures, his gratification in regard to Marian was now but a ſecondary cauſe; to ſatisfy at once his own revenge on her and her brother was at preſent the principal object. That he feared Montgomery more than he choſe to allow even to himſelf, was true; and as he could not conquer him by bodily ſtrength, to ſtab him through the honour of his ſiſter appeared ſo complete a revenge, that Berners would not have heſitated venturing his life to accompliſh it. To reconnoitre, or mak

inquiries

inquiries by day-light, in the ſtreet where ſhe dwelt, did not appear prudent; but in the evening, Frederic declaring he would again go to the play, he pleaded a prior engagement, and reſolved to begin his machinations.

He walked up and down the ſtreet where Mrs. Moſely lived, for two or three times, without making any obſervation, for her ſhop and houſe, though at an early hour, were cloſe ſhut; at length eſpying a card againſt a door nearly oppoſite, he reſolved to try whether any information was to be obtained by that means, and knocking, a ſervant girl ſoon appeared to aſk his commands. Apologizing for calling ſo late, he requeſted to ſee the lodgings; when an elderly woman immediately made her appearance from the parlour, and if any judgment is to be gained from dreſs and perſon, hers was all that Berners could have wiſhed. Coarſe very fat and unwieldy, her vulgarity was rendered more conſpicuous by the prepoſterous manner

in

in which ſhe had decorated herſelf, the blazing crimſon ribbands that bedecked her head, forming but a lighter ſhade to contraſt the fiery red of her countenance. It has been obſerved that Berners' appearance was calculated to pleaſe, and the effect did not appear loſt on the landlady; who with a profuſion of words, and almoſt as many courteſies, led the way to the firſt floor. Berners knew too much of the world, not to be almoſt aſſured that he had met ſuch a character as he could have deſired, and the price was aſked, agreed on, and two guineas thrown down as earneſt in a few minutes.

"And now, Madam," ſaid he, "I muſt inform you, that the apartments are not for myſelf, but a young lady, whom I expect out of the country in the courſe of a few days, or it may happen to be a month; but that ſhall make no difference in our agreement, I would wiſh to place her with a gentlewoman of your prepoſſeſſing appearance." Berners fixed his eyes ſtedfaſtly upon her while

while he ſpoke, and was perfectly ſatisfied, to meet no objection at receiving a lady unrecommended, but by an unknown and gay young fellow. "The lady," reſumed he, "is perfectly reſpectable, as you will find; but I hope you have a reputable neighbourhood, ſhe would wiſh to be private—what ſhop is that I obſerve oppoſite to you?"

The landlady, who doubtleſs from Berners' appearance and manner expected an intrigue of the firſt-rate conſequence, replied——

"A milliner's;—a woman that I cannot ſay I much like, but ſhe has nothing to do with me, though ſhe was once buſy enough to ſcandalize ſome young ladies in my houſe; ſince which I have had Venetian blinds to all my windows, for I deteſt to be over-looked: every gentleman or lady's apartment is their caſtle, as I ſays to my maid, and as long as they behave decorouſly, and as gentlefolks ſhould, I am never impudent enough to pry into their buſineſs. Let every one

one look at home, as I ſays to Molly, and they'll find enough to do—at leaſt I can for one, and ſo may they."

"Very juſtly and ſenſibly obſerved, my dear Madam; every one has not your underſtanding; your neighbour doubtleſs has no lodgers, or ſhe would know the world better."

"As to that," replied ſhe, "ſhe knows the world well enough; but ſhe is one of your demure ſort, and admits nothing into her houſe, but brothers and ſiſters, uncles and nieces."

"A very provident lady: pray, has ſhe any of thoſe relations with her now?"

"Oh yes! and a curious ſtory it is, my maid and hers are firſt couſins; but that ſhe knows nothing about: ſo when I ſends my Molly to market, the wenches ſometimes meet, and have a goſſip. She need not hold her head ſo high, for ſhe is as poor as Job, every body ſays; and though ſhe turns up her noſe at me and my houſe, I'd have her to know, that though I am a lone woman, I can buy her

her any day of the week. My poor dear huſband, God reſt his ſoul! kept the King's Arms hotel; and though he would drink a cup too much and ſometimes kick up a riot, he was a kind heart in the main."

Berners felt himſelf perfectly at eaſe by this declaration—"But, my dear Madam," ſaid he, "you were going to tell me ſome droll ſtory reſpecting your neighbour."

"So I was. Molly, ſays I, I knows a thing or two; that girl's no more his niece than I am; but I beg your pardon; as my poor huſband uſed to ſay, I often begins in the middle of a ſtory.—Well then, ſome months ago, one morning as I was looking through my window, I ſee mother Moſely come home in a hackney coach with a young handſome girl in deep mourning; I'm ſure ſhe was in great diſtreſs, for ſhe was continually in the upper floor working and crying. But I ſhould tell you, Molly's couſin did not live there then, or I ſhould have known

more of the matter. At laſt comes a young fellow, her brother they ſaid, an' pleaſe you, and all the ſorrow vaniſhed, ſhe was as merry as a grig. By and by I loſt them both, and ſaw nothing more of either till the other day, when as handſome a coach as you would wiſh to ſee ſtops at the door, and out ſteps Miſs with an old fellow, who they ſay is her uncle."

"Relationſhip is a very convenient cover," ſaid Berners; "but your maid's couſin muſt be the beſt judge whether it is really ſo."

"Lord! ſhe's a poor ignoramus, and knows nothing but what's beat into her head. Why, the old fellow hardly ever goes out, or comes in, but he kiſſes her, and bids her take care of herſelf.—Pray, when did you ever know uncles ſo fond? I'm ſure I was brought up with one, and ſo far from kiſſing me, he uſed to kick and beat me black and blue."

"He was unworthy ſuch a relation," ſaid Berners; "but have the uncle and niece ſeparate apartments?"

"Oh,

"Oh, to be ſure! ſhe's cunning enough. Molly's couſin won't believe but what they are relations; if they are not, ſhe ſays, ſhe is ſure the old man would marry her any day."

Berners aſked the name of the parties, and, being informed, pretended to recollect them, and deſired his officious landlady to make all the inquiry in her power. He then took leave, not forgetting to preſent Molly with half a guinea as ſhe let him out.

Berners returned home much ſooner than his uſual hour, and waited in anxious expectation until Frederic came from the play. He had in vain ſought both houſes; Marian was not at either. Wearied and ſpiritleſs, he threw himſelf into a chair, and remained ſilent until Berners began to relate his diſcoveries.

"Her uncle, do you ſay?" interrupted Frederic. "That ſurely is impoſſible; for it is certain Montgomery and himſelf were ſtrangers until that accurſed quarrel at the coffee-houſe."

"He is at leaſt as much her uncle as Montgomery is her brother, I firmly believe," replied Berners.

"That Montgomery *is* really her brother, I will pledge my life," ſaid Frederic.

"What, from his own words?" returned Berners ironically.

"Not only from his own word, but from *unanſwerable, undeniable* evidence."

"What *ſecret* reaſons you may have to affirm it, I cannot tell," ſaid Berners; "but that their relationſhip is all a farce, is not only my opinion, but that of others."

"I cannot enter into it now," ſaid St. Auſtyn, "but I am convinced of its truth. What this new uncle may be, I have my doubts, and which had I worlds, I would give to have ſatisfied. To write to her I know would be uſeleſs, my letter would be returned unopened."

"By my ſoul! you are infatuated to this girl, and yet want the reſolution to get her into your power."

This

This converſation continued until they retired for the night; Berners diſſatisfied that he could not urge the temper of St. Auſtyn to ſome daring act; and Frederic diſcontented with all around him, and yet more ſo with himſelf.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SUDDEN RESOLUTION—PERSEVERANCE.

FREDERIC again paſſed a diſordered night, and the perturbation of his mind had ſo far impaired his health, that in the morning he was unable to leave his apartment. He however refuſed, even to obſtinacy, Berners' requeſt to call in a phyſician; for juſtly could he have aſked with Macbeth,

" Canſt thou miniſter to a mind diſeaſed,
Pluck from the memory a rooted ſorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with ſome ſweet oblivious antidote
Cleanſe the ſtuff'd boſom of that perilous ſtuff
That weighs upon the heart?——"

For

For three days St. Auſtyn remained confined; but on the fourth, though pale and languid, he came down in the morning. The quiet of a ſick chamber had produced his uſual ſelf-accuſation, and the ſame reſolution of amendment, with this difference, that his former fits of contrition were ever attended with a violence that exhauſted itſelf; the preſent determination was more calm, and rather tinctured with melancholy than paſſion; and having breakfaſted, Berners was not a little ſurpriſed to hear him deſire the ſervant to call in all his bills in the courſe of a day or two. On the departure of the man, Berners expreſſed his ſurpriſe, ſaying that he knew payment at the preſent would be far from convenient; "and I have been thinking," continued he, "that as there are ſome leaſes of conſiderable farms ready to fall in, you might raiſe a good ſum that way, as they are greatly underlet."

"I will not advance them a pound," returned Frederic; "it would be highly

unjuſt to make their holders pay for my extravagance; *I* only have been to blame, and *I* alone have a right to ſuffer."

Berners, who regarded this as no more than one of thoſe retroſpections to which St. Auſtyn was ſubject, made little reply; but ſoon after aſked him gaily, what he thought of a party to his country houſe. "The air," ſaid he, "will be of ſervice, and lively company paſs off thoſe vapours that oppreſs you."

"I cannot accompany you," replied Frederic, "but I have writings and papers there which may oblige me to go in a day or two."

Berners finding his melancholy not likely to decreaſe, ſoon after left him. St. Auſtyn for ſome time after his departure remained loſt in thought; at length he exclaimed—"I reſolve to abjure my vices when they have robbed me of every friend, except the partner of them. Poor Berners! for the happineſs of both 'tis neceſſary to part. Yet, he ſhall not find me ungrateful: but our purſuits

purſuits muſt hereafter be different; in the way moſt ſuited to his inclination may he find happineſs! Happineſs *I* do not expect, but 'tis not in diſſipation I ſhall even enjoy quiet; if I have loſt the eſteem of every one, at leaſt I will endeavour to regain my own."

He then went out, and, calling on his ſolicitor, entreated him to procure a reputable perſon to advance him a ſum of money, for which he would encumber his eſtate.

The ſolicitor finding him peremptory accompanied him immediately to a friend of his own, who, after the neceſſary preliminaries, agreed to advance the ſum of ſix thouſand pounds; for the payment of which with intereſt, Frederic made over the rents of his eſtate for three years, reſerving to himſelf five hundred pounds yearly.

This buſineſs agreed upon, he returned home, and, Berners being engaged, dined alone. Accuſtomed to company, this ſolitude was not pleaſant, and with

difficulty he reſtrained himſelf from ordering the chariot to take him to the play.—"I will conquer this folly," ſaid he, "or die in the ſtruggle; why ſhould I court pain? I will, if poſſible, never ſee her more, for never can I meet her with indifference." During the evening he endeavoured to arrange his accounts; but neither his head nor mind was calm enough for that effort, and a few lines encloſing a draft for a hundred guineas to his *fair friend*, telling her they muſt meet no more, was the labour of the evening until Berners returned, and who having drank more wine, than makes man a rational companion, they ſoon retired to their reſpective apartments.

For two days St. Auſtyn was out during the whole morning, and alone the remainder of the day; for Berners could not reſolve to relinquiſh his engagements, and was alſo completely vexed to ſee the reflective humour of his pupil continue. Frederic's uneaſineſs

was

was likewiſe increaſed by receiving no reply to the letter he had written to Gertrude; for, not doubting but that it had reached her, he could only attribute her ſilence to a poſitive command from Mrs. Stanhope.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW ARRANGEMENT.

BERNERS did not riſe the following morning till late, when he was informed that Frederic had been out ever ſince ſix o'clock. On entering the breakfaſt parlour, the firſt object that ſtruck him was a packet directed to himſelf in St. Auſtyn's hand. Aſtoniſhed, he tore it open, and read as follows:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"My abrupt departure I think you will excuſe when I ſay that I could not ſummon courage to declare that we

we muſt part; a thouſand kind remembrances would have ariſen, and made me wiſh perhaps to relinquiſh a reſolution, which I had rather periſh than infringe upon. You have ſeen enough to be aſſured that it is not in the riot of diſſipation that my heart can ever regain its ſerenity; I am therefore reſolved to try the effect of retirement and quiet. But as I know you approve, and are formed for the buſtle of life, and have frequently wiſhed for a commiſſion in the army, I have exerted my little power to procure you the encloſed, convinced that you will fill it with credit; and which I flatter myſelf you will accept as a teſtimonial of my affection. I have now, my dear Berners, to requeſt, that as you value my happineſs, you do not endeavour to win me from my purpoſe; it would be unavailing, and only tend to diſunite a friendſhip, which I hope death alone will terminate. You may judge of the ſtrength of the reſolution I have formed,

by my forcing myſelf from London when I knew Miſs Montgomery was there, and that even without further inquiry; for, convinced that I could not learn any thing that would tend towards bringing back peace to my heart, I determined, let it coſt me however dear, to ſnatch myſelf from it. If ſhe is virtuous, ſhe will never be any thing to me; if otherwiſe, ſhe *never ſhall*. My word was paſſed to her brother; and ſo proſper me Heaven as I mean to keep it! I ſhall remain at Kew for a few days, until I have finiſhed the ſettlement of my affairs, which are in a ſtate of intricacy that diſtracts my head; if therefore you have an hour to ſpare (remember the conditions) I ſhall be happy to embrace the only friend wayward fate has left.

"F. St. Austyn."

"P. S. Should there be any letters, I ſhall eſteem it a favour if you will encloſe them immediately. That Gertrude ſhould

ſhould not anſwer mine, both ſurpriſes and vexes me."

The various emotions that actuated Berners during the peruſal of this epiſtle are eaſier to be felt than deſcribed. It has already been obſerved, that if he had a predilection for any one, it was for Frederic. Heretofore he had led him at pleaſure; but now, rouſing the dormant faculties of his reaſon, he had taken the only ſtep that could effectually reſtore him to honour and reſpectability. Berners at once ſaw that this reſolution muſt place an inſuperable bar between them, as his arts reſpecting Gertrude, and the conſequent meanneſs it had made him commit, muſt unavoidably be diſcovered. The commiſſion too puzzled him, as he was convinced St. Auſtyn muſt have increaſed his difficulties to procure it; and that he ſhould take ſteps of ſuch conſequence without conſulting him, ſhewed an independence of ſpirit that he did not expect. At firſt he

he reſolved to ſend it back; but a few minutes put that idea to flight, as a ſituation in the army preſented at once a conſequence and independence above his expectations. Notwithſtanding, he reſolved to leave no means untried to bring back St. Auſtyn to the path he had quitted, and, by plunging him yet deeper in error, to render him the leſs ſuſceptible of the villainy of his own conduct.

He immediately called for his horſe, and ſoon reached Kew, where he found St. Auſtyn ſurrounded with papers. Entering with his uſual cheerfulneſs, he began ſinging—"*If you turn Monk, I'll turn Friar*, &c. and by my ſoul! that will be an excellent amendment to your ſcheme. How often have I envied thoſe happy fellows who enjoy the unlimited confidence of the young and beautiful! Let me indulge the thought," continued he: "methinks I ſee myſelf ſeated in the confeſſional, glancing aſide from under my cowl, at a blooming creature kneeling at my feet—Oh! I could never bear

bear it; I ſhould raiſe her in my arms, ſeal my benediction on her lips with a kiſs of peace, and obliterate all her errors in a moment."

"I rather think," ſaid Frederic, "that you would add to them. Your ſpirits, Berners, are an inexhauſtible fund, for which I could almoſt envy you."

"Would I could at leaſt communicate a ſufficient quantity to preſerve you from thoſe fits of the ſpleen that imbitter your life! But to buſineſs; for that brought me hither. I feel your generoſity; but if it is only to be purchaſed at the expence of your friendſhip, I relinquiſh it."

"But why," ſaid St. Auſtyn, "at the expence of my friendſhip? I have long been ſenſible, my dear Berners, that our tempers were widely different. You are ſprightly, and love the buſtle of the world; I am dull, and it on the contrary diſguſts and fatigues me. From the firſt of our acquaintance I have loved you, nor

nor has time leſſened that attachment. Your purſuits I have adopted, and your inclinations have become mine; but education and nature have ever been at variance. *I* ruſhed into pleaſures without enjoying them, and laviſhed my fortune without ſatisfaction. Inclination and neceſſity now make me reſolve to adopt the oppoſite extreme. If it fails, I can but return to the life I have quitted: if it ſucceeds, my end is anſwered."

Berners attempted to ſpeak, but St. Auſtyn prevented him.

"A few words more and I have done. Do not accuſe me with want of friendſhip; tax it to the higheſt of my ability, it ſhall not ſhrink, but ſuffer me to have an independent will. For you to adopt the life I mean to purſue is impoſſible; it is equally ſo for me to continue that I have led ſome time paſt; neither my conſtitution, fortune, or inclination can ſuſtain it. Let us therefore endeavour to be happy each in his own way, and, in

ſpite

ſpite of the difference of purſuits, preſerve our antient friendſhip inviolate. Seek not therefore to move me from my purpoſe; your perſuaſions may give me pain, but cannot change it."

"I ſhall not endeavour it," replied Berners with viſible pique; "I have many obligations to you, Mr. St. Auſtyn, and can only grieve that the contracted ſtate of my finances prevents my diſcharging them."

"You are unkind as well as unjuſt," ſaid Frederic. "Have I not conſidered you as a brother, and ſhould ſo paltry a conſideration come between us?"

"'Tis alone that accurſed Marian that has made this alteration," anſwered he. "Give me but the word, and I here pledge my life to deviſe ſome means to put her into your power. I can know every manœuvre from the ſervant of the houſe, by means of the old cat that lives oppoſite; and if I do not ſeize ſome favourable opportunity, ſtigmatize me for a fool."

"I have

"I have often told you," replied Frederic, "that I would rather periſh, than ſubmit to ſuch a ridiculous attempt. Were even chance to throw her into my power, you ſurely cannot think me wretch ſufficient to profit by it? and even ſuppoſing her as complaiſant as you have ſometimes repreſented, believe me, I ſhould be equally as diſſatisfied as at preſent. You will perhaps laugh when I declare, that my affection for Miſs Montgomery is ſo pure that I cannot bear the reflection of unchaſtity to mingle with it. This myſterious uncle, I think, has done more towards conquering my paſſion, than years of ſtubborn virtue could have accompliſhed."

"By my life! ſuch love to me is a paradox, nor can I comprehend it."

"I believe it; but does it not prove that our tempers are totally different? You, I have no doubt, will find rank, and ſatisfaction in a ſtate to which you are attached, and to which your ſpirit and pleaſant diſpoſition cannot fail to lead

lead you. The utmoſt I aſpire to is quiet and independence."

"Surely, however, it is no infringement on your plan, to aſk how, or rather where, you intend to put this plan in effect."

"You have aſked a queſtion that I can ſcarcely anſwer," returned St. Auſtyn; "but ſay that you unconditionally accept the ſmall tribute of my friendſhip that I left this morning, and as far as I can I will inform you."

Berners held out his hand, and received the friendly preſſure of St. Auſtyn without a bluſh.

"I propoſe then, at leaſt ſuch is my preſent intention, to viſit the continent, and, if I find any pleaſant aſylum, perhaps to fix there for the enſuing three years, as I have engaged my eſtate for that period to liquidate my debts, reſerving only five hundred pounds yearly; the greater part of which will neceſſarily be employed in the ſupport of the old ſervants at the manor-houſe; for never

ſhall

ſhall my folly reduce thoſe whoſe ſtrength and youth were expended in the ſervice of my parents, to ſeek in their old age a freſh maſter; it is a mere act of juſtice to pay the debt due to their grey hairs."

"And can you ſuppoſe, accuſtomed as you have been to all the comforts of life, that you can ſubſiſt, and even travel with ſuch a ſum?"

"Very poſſible," anſwered Frederic. "Have I not youth, health, and ſtrength? and are we not aſſured from numberleſs daily examples, that the neceſſaries of life are to be procured at a much eaſier rate? My carriages and horſes will be ſold after my departure, and my new ſervants diſcharged. This arrangement, you will clearly ſee, muſt cut off all ideas of profuſion; it will alſo point out to you the neceſſity of my giving up Miſs Montgomery. No wife *ſhall* ſhare my poverty, no miſtreſs *will* ſhare it."

Berners' wiſh to bring back St. Auſtyn to a life of diſſipation was greatly leſſened when he found the means were gone, for

for he well knew it was not to be ſupported without money; inwardly, therefore, reprobating the ſtep he had taken, and his weakneſs in retrenching himſelf to pay his debts, he took leave, ſaying he ſhould viſit him again in a day or two.

As Berners rode home, and reflected on what had paſſed, he clearly ſaw that all friendſhip muſt ſoon be at an end with Frederic, as it was now impoſſible to intercept his letters; hope however remained, that, as he propoſed immediately going abroad, an explanation might be avoided.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WHIMSICAL MEETING—DOUBTS REMOVED.

MARIAN, the night ſhe returned from the play after meeting St. Auſtyn, recalled to her memory every word that had paſſed between them. The ſudden change of his manner, from lively to extreme ſerioufneſs, was not loſt upon her; but doubly prejudiced againſt him from learning that he had actually *met* her brother, though ſhe did not know the particulars, and likewiſe from the part Mrs. Stanhope ſuppoſed him to have in Berners' duplicity, every favourable idea was ſuddenly cruſhed; ſhe dreaded

dreaded being the occaſion of freſh diſpute, and reſolved not to mention having ſeen him, until ſhe had firſt conſulted Mrs. Stanhope—a requeſt ſhe alſo made to Mrs. Moſely.

The whole of their buſineſs was now completed, and Marian looked forward to their return into Dorſetſhire with pleaſure, and ſome degree of impatience; for the Colonel's engagements with his old friend had already protracted their ſtay much longer than was intended. It was not however poſſible for her even to declare her wiſhes in this caſe; for ſhe knew their weight with her uncle, and could not endure the idea of haſtening him away from an act in which his own ſatisfaction was ſo much concerned.

His friend Captain Vanſittart had been his ſchool-fellow, and companion when he firſt entered the army, and for many years a friendſhip had ſubſiſted between them, until the Colonel going abroad, and both growing in years, a correſpondence had been neglected. But

this meeting, which was accidental, recalled all their former intimacy, nor would Vanſittart reſt until the Colonel promiſed to dine with him as frequently as poſſible before he returned to the country. This requeſt was the more inconvenient, as the Captain reſided near Richmond, and was unable to return any viſit, being diſabled with the gout; his journey to town the day he met the Colonel being unavoidable, in reſpect to ſome pecuniary matters. A ſimilarity of character made this meeting doubly pleaſing to both, as they could undiſturbed after dinner take a cheerful glaſs, fight over again their old battles, beſiege towns, and ſlay enemies, with all the energy of their youthful days.

It was now Monday, and the enſuing Wedneſday was fixed for their departure; the Colonel therefore reſolved to gratify his old friend by paſſing the intervening day with him, and accordingly ſet off at an early hour on horſeback, attended by his ſervant. At dinner he happened

happened to recollect ſome buſineſs he had neglected to tranſact, and immediately reſolved to diſpatch his man to town to rectify the omiſſion—concluding his meſſage, by telling him it was needleſs to return, as he would ride home unattended.

This buſineſs ſettled, and dinner over, the veterans pledged each other till it began to grow late, and a number of intereſting ſubjects protracted the Colonel's departure; until at length the riſing of the moon warned him it was time for him to have reached London, inſtead of ſetting out for that purpoſe. Taking leave therefore of his friend, he rode cheerfully forward, though ſomewhat warmed with wine, until he reached the road leading to Turnham Green; when his horſe ſtumbling unexpectedly threw him on his head in the midſt of the road, and ſet off full gallop.

Though he was not materially hurt, he was ſtunned, and lay ſome time unable to riſe; in which ſtate, a waggon had ine-

vitably paſſed over him, (as the driver was behind, and his companion aſleep on the load) had not a horſeman by the light of the moon perceived him, and, ſpurring forward, luckily laid hold of the leading horſe; calling at the ſame time, in a loud and commanding tone, to know the reaſon of the neglect.

Alarmed at the accident that had nearly happened, the fellows were ready to make any ſubmiſſion; when the gentleman, giving his horſe to one of them, raiſed the Colonel; whoſe noſe beginning to bleed, he immediately recovered, and, clapping his hand to his bare head, exclaimed:

"Z——ds! I have loſt my hat and wig. Confound that fellow's old port! If it had not been for the battle of Minden I ſhould have been home two hours ago. I have had a deviliſh rap on the head, that's certain; but I have recollection enough to know, that had it not been for ſome one it might have been much worſe."

The waggoner's excuſes ſoon let the Colonel into the whole buſineſs; and turning to his preſerver, he entreated him to give him his arm, and accompany him a few minutes to the Star Inn, while the men ſought for his hat and wig, and endeavoured to regain his horſe.

The gentleman complied; and being ſhewn an apartment, the Colonel, having cleaned his face from the dirt and blood, prepared to return thanks, but had ſcarcely raiſed his eyes, when he exclaimed,

"Can I believe my ſight? Surely it is St. Auſtyn?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Frederic with affected calmneſs, "it is St. Auſtyn; what is there ſo ſurpriſing in that? Even the *uncle* of Miſs Montgomery is welcome to claim from him a mere ſervice of humanity."

"And why the devil ſhould not Miſs Montgomery's uncle claim it as well as another man? I ſhould like to know. Is he not compoſed of the ſame ſtuff? The

old faſhioned materials of fleſh and blood, even you bucks can't do without for the ſouls of you; and if there is any partiality for relationſhip, you ought to have ſome for me; for I fancy you was confoundedly in love with my niece, when it carried you ſo far as to offer matrimony."

"Your niece!" repeated Frederic ironically.

"What tantrum bites now? Sure you knew that? all the world knows it. Egad, I'm ſo proud both of Albert and her, that I am for ever ſounding my trumpet before them."

"Does the acquaintance of a night conſtitute relationſhip, or accompanying a man in a duel adopt him?" ſaid Frederic.

"Yes, Sir, ſometimes; as in our caſe, uncles ſpring up in coffee-houſes like muſhrooms in a hot-bed, and nieces like angels in the form of chamber-maids. Aye, St. Auſtyn, that was the ſhape in which you was caught, was it not?"

"I am

"I am not inclined to joke, Sir," ſaid St. Auſtyn; "I rejoice you have received no injury, and wiſh you a good night."

"Nay, nay, we muſt not part ſo," returned the Colonel. "I wiſh to do you a good office in ſpite of you; for you have done me *two* of the beſt turns I ever received from any perſon in my whole life."

"I confeſs they are paſt my comprehenſion," anſwered Frederic; "but if you allude to this night, let it be expunged, as I repeat, it was a ſervice that even Miſs Montgomery's *uncle* was welcome to."

"Miſs Montgomery's uncle again! Why, what the pies ails Miſs Montgomery's uncle, that you look at him as if you would eat him without ſauce or ſalt? Come come, St. Auſtyn, you have no reaſon to be ſo glum with me, for your aunt knows nothing of the fighting match. Egad, I could not get Albert there, till I pledged my honour not to mention it."

"His forbearance is more mortifying than the avowal," ſaid Frederic ſurpriſed; "it was a day I ſhall ever think of with ſhame and deteſtation."

"It was a day on which I ſhall ever ſing Te Deum," replied the Colonel, "a day in which you, or rather your friend, brought me acquainted with my nephew, which is an obligation I will ever avow. The next is nearly as great. In all probability, had it not been for you to-night, I had been a dead man; and as my will is unſigned, an eſtate of ſixteen hundred per year would have gone to another branch of my family inſtead of Albert; in which caſe I ſhould never have reſted in my grave."

St. Auſtyn looked at him with amazement; like Montgomery, he almoſt thought him diſtracted, while the Colonel continued:

"Pleaſe God I get ſafe to town this night, it ſhall however be completed. I ſent my man to tell my ſolicitor I would call in the courſe of the evening; and now,

now, St. Auſtyn, as I owe you this obligation, you may as well add another to it, and accompany me to witneſs the deed."

St. Auſtyn felt ſtaggered.

"I am aſtoniſhed," ſaid he, "I ſcarcely know what I ſay; but how is it poſſible that you can be Miſs Montgomery's uncle?"

"Z——ds, I believe you are diſtracted, or that a ſpell is laid upon you, to repeat nothing but *Miſs Montgomery's uncle!* Why, if you don't believe I am her uncle, who the devil will you pleaſe to have me? The Emperor of Morocco, the Cham of Tartary, or the Man in the Moon? 'Tis a curſed hard thing that a man cannot be uncle to his own ſiſter's children, without all this fuſs."

"I beg pardon, but—"

"Well well, ſay no more about it; if you will accompany me to town, I will tell you more as we go along, for I ſuppoſe I muſt take a chaiſe. I begin to think the time long; for that gipſy Ma-

rian will be fretting and ſtewing, and ſending the fellows after me, if ſhe finds out I am alone. Beſides, St. Auſtyn, I want to carry home good news. We ſet off for Dorſetſhire to-morrow; your aunt, I am ſure, ſtill loves you; and for that ſweet girl Gertrude, you are never mentioned, but a tear follows the name."

"Merciful Heaven! in what a labyrinth have I then been wandering!—But you are miſtaken in reſpect to Mrs. Stanhope; ſhe even prevents Gertrude writing to me."

"Were my own brother to affirm *that*, he is a liar," replied the Colonel:—"nay, never look big, nor bluſter; ſome miſtake muſt have happened; Mrs. Stanhope is incapable of falſehood, and ſhe lamented before me, not hearing from you, in regard to ſome very particular letters herſelf and Miſs St. Auſtyn had written, but what the contents were, I do not know."

"I have never received a line, and therefore

therefore hold it impoſſible," ſaid St. Auſtyn with aſſumed calmneſs: "Had one failed, all could not."

"I remember once when I was much your age," anſwered the Colonel, "a favourite Sultana of mine made very free with ſome of my papers. Yours might do the ſame; and if ſhe has, treat her as I did; wiſh her a good day, ſhew her the door, and ſend her trumpery after her."

"I never put it into the power of my Sultanas to ſerve me a trick of that kind," ſaid Frederic.

"Perhaps not," returned the Colonel: "But what have you done with *Fine Bones?* I hope he has broke his neck; for then, to uſe Albert's words, you will, I doubt not, be all your family could wiſh."

"I ſhould eſteem it a favour if Mr. Montgomery would not trouble himſelf to form any opinion reſpecting me," ſaid St. Auſtyn haughtily.

"Sir, you ought, on the contrary, to be obliged to him.—Egad! I have heard

him ſpeak ſo kindly of you to Mrs. Stanhope, that I have ſtared with aſtoniſhment, knowing what had paſſed; but he lays all, as I ſaid before, to *Fine Bones.*"

"You will oblige me, if you mention my friends, to ſpeak more reſpectfully of them," ſaid Frederic.

"Egad! and ſo I will where they deſerve it. There's your aunt, now, ſhe is an angel, both in form and mind; and though the ſpring and ſummer of her days are paſt, who can regret it, when bleſt with ſo rich an autumn? Then there's your ſiſter, a blooming little cherub, ſpring in all its glory; I know but one to compare with her, and that's Marian, and 'faith I know not which bears the bell."

At that moment the waiter entered with the Colonel's hat and wig; but the horſe not being caught, he ordered a chaiſe, and again preſſed St. Auſtyn to accompany him.

To contend with ſuch a character, Frederic ſaw was unavailing, and to quarrel

quarrel with him ridiculous; he likewiſe was impatient to learn all he could reſpecting Montgomery and his ſiſter: he therefore ſent home his horſe, with a meſſage that he ſhould not return that night, and took his place in the chaiſe by the Colonel.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN OLD ENEMY CONVERTED INTO A NEW FRIEND.

THEY were hardly ſeated before St. Auſtyn's curioſity again led to ſome explanation, though he had ſcarce any doubt remaining of the truth of what he had heard, particularly as it appeared ſanctioned by Mrs. Stanhope.

"You will excuſe my rudeneſs of this night," ſaid he, "when you recollect, the evening that we firſt met, you ſaid you had never ſeen Mr. Montgomery before."

"And I ſaid true. I arrived in London only the preceding day, and was in ſearch of him and his ſiſter. I had been diſap-

diſappointed of finding him according to an addreſs my ſiſter ſent me in a letter from her death-bed, and only entered the coffee-houſe to beguile my vexation, and was reſolving on the route I ſhould take the enſuing morning, when *Fine Bones* threw the wine and uttered the name of Montgomery. Egad, I pricked up my ears, and was not a little pleaſed with him. But, as chance had thus brought about a meeting, I was reſolved, if poſſible, to ſee the end of the adventure; and by queſtions being entirely ſatisfied of his identity, without diſcovering myſelf, I offered to accompany him in the morning."

"And is it poſſible that even *then* he was unacquainted with your relationſhip?" ſaid St. Auſtyn confuſedly.

"He was. The ſcene going home was worth all that had paſſed before. He firſt of all treated me as if I was crazy-headed, until I worked him up into ſuch a rage, by not placing my words exactly as he liked reſpecting his father and ſiſter,

ter, that egad, if I had not been in as great a one, and let out the ſecret in my paſſion, I verily believe he would have had a bruſh with me. The diſcovery calmed my gentleman at once; but the devil of ſubmiſſion did he make: we were however the beſt friends in the world, and ſo I doubt not we ſhall ever continue. I made him leave the banker's, where your aunt's goodneſs had placed him, that very day, and ſoon after ſet off poſt to Dorſetſhire to ſee Marian; but the plague a bit could I ſtir him till I pledged my honour to conceal what had paſſed between you."

Frederic felt the blood mount in his cheeks, but remained ſilent, and the Colonel continued:

"When we reached your aunt's, the ſecond ſcene was as good as the firſt. Marian was out, and Mrs. Stanhope, at my requeſt, introduced me as a ſtranger; but whether the cut of my face did not pleaſe her, or my manners were not to her liking, I cannot ſay, but ſhe looked

looked at me as aſkant as a young wench at an old lover. However, I ſet all right there, and have ſince purchaſed the eſtate at Black-wood for Albert. Marian ſtill reſides with your aunt and ſiſter; but we may ſcarcely be ſaid to be two families, as a day ſeldom paſſes but part of it is ſpent together."

An involuntary but heavy ſigh eſcaped St. Auſtyn.

"What the pies do you ſigh for?" ſaid the Colonel. "Though it has coſt me a good rap on the pate, I'm heartily glad we met. Let all old grievances be forgotten. The obligations we owe Mrs. Stanhope may well obliterate ſuch trifles. Beſide, do I not owe you my life? and I have the vanity to think Albert will readily allow the obligation."

"For Heaven's ſake, do not mention as ſuch, a mere act of humanity! I am grieved at the affront Miſs Montgomery experienced on my account; but," continued he ſighing, I muſt ſay it has been expiated. To Mr. Montgomery I can make

make no conceſſion; he has fully avenged himſelf in a manner never to be obliterated or forgotten."

"Piſh piſh, it ſhall be forgotten. Why, he honeſtly confeſſed to me, that the night before your meeting was the moſt uneaſy he ever paſſed in his life, until he came to the reſolution of acting as he did. Should I," ſaid he, "have wounded Mrs. Stanhope's nephew, however it might have been palliated by the word *honour*, I ſhould have felt myſelf a villain. She loves him almoſt as a ſon, and ſhall I ſtab her quiet, though he has been guilty of ſome errors towards me?—*me* whom ſhe reſcued from the horrors of a priſon, and whoſe ſiſter ſhe protected, and treats with diſtinguiſhed kindneſs!"

Frederic's head ſunk on his boſom, and tears involuntarily dropped from his eyes.

"Spare me," ſaid he ſcarcely articulate, "ſpare me; the remembrance is too painful."

"What

"What the pies, then, do you begin to talk of Albert for? Why, he's my hobby-horſe, and ſet me off I could go on from June to January. But I have much to ſay to you reſpecting yourſelf. Firſt tell me, where's *Fine Bones?*"

"I cannot reply to your queſtions while you ſpeak of my friend in ſo derogatory a manner."

"Well then," returned the Colonel, "where's Berners? for I think that's his name—I will not call him your friend—whether you tell me or not."

"Mr. Berners has entered the army. I myſelf think of going abroad for ſome time."

"What, and leaving him behind?" aſked the Colonel.

"The duties of his profeſſion will require his preſence at home."

The Colonel gave a loud huzza, and ſnatching his hand ſhook it heartily.

"Look you, St. Auſtyn," ſaid he, "one of the moſt ardent wiſhes of my heart is to ſhew my gratitude to your aunt.

aunt. She protected my ſiſter's children when they had no friend to ſuccour them — Albert in a priſon, and Marian reduced to ſeek a ſervice. Let me in return enjoy the ſatisfaction of preſenting her a nephew reſtored to himſelf and her wiſhes."

St. Auſtyn preſſed the Colonel's hand, but remained ſilent.

"Come, come," ſaid he, "you may feel a little awkward or ſo at the firſt meeting; but I know ſhe loves you, and has ſuffered uneaſineſs on your account, though the greatneſs of her ſpirit cauſes her to conceal it. Once reconciled we ſhall be as happy as kings, and rejoice all the day long."

"I ſhall never rejoice more," ſaid Frederic.

"Pſhaw!" returned the Colonel, "why, what, do you think, becauſe you have not exactly walked the ſtraight line, that you are to be caſt off? No ſuch thing. For my part, I muſt pluck the beam out of my own eye before I can ſeek

ſeek after the mote in yours. I hope I am an honeſt fellow, St. Auſtyn; nay, I feel more ſatisfied with myſelf ſince I have done my duty by my ſiſter's children: yet, believe me, I was a ſorry chap in my youth, and where you have one fault I dare ſay I had twenty."

Such diſcourſe with little variation brought them to town; where the Colonel ordering a porter ſent a meſſage to Marian, that he was returned, but could not be at home till late, as he had unavoidable buſineſs.

On reaching the lawyer's the Colonel introduced his companion as one of his witneſſes; and the preamble being read, St. Auſtyn was not a little aſtoniſhed to hear as follows:

"To my dear nephew Albert Montgomery, ſon of my ſiſter Marian, wife of Albert Montgomery, I bequeath the whole of my eſtates whereſoever and whatſoever—together with the whole of my ready money in the funds or elſewhere, to the amount of forty thouſand pounds;

pounds; ſubject only to the payment of twelve thouſand pounds to my niece, his ſiſter, Marian Montgomery, on her marriage, or attaining the age of twenty-one."

"And now," ſaid the Colonel, having ſigned his name, "there's an act of juſtice done, and I can ſleep in ſecurity. Believe me, St. Auſtyn, I never look at that boy and girl without my heart glowing with thankfulneſs to heaven for the gift. I have been forty years in the army, and perhaps may have failed in the eſtabliſhed *etiquette* of many points of duty; but a ſoldier's life, though a life of honour, is ſubject to ſo many viciſſitudes, that he has not time to think of religion like another man; for no ſooner, perhaps, does he kneel to ſay his prayers, than the trumpet ſounds to arms, and how can he talk of forgiving his enemies, when 'tis the wiſh of his heart to extirpate them?"

The Colonel's buſineſs concluded, St. Auſtyn would have bade him farewel, but the veteran replied:

"No,

"No, no, as you have conferred ſo many favours on me to-night, you may as well conclude as you have begun. Give me your arm home; for, to confeſs the truth, my head is not perfectly eaſy, and the motion of a carriage increaſes it. I do not therefore think I ſhall ſet off home to-morrow, ſo ſhall be glad if you will give me a call: intruſt me with what letters you think fit, and I warrant I'll give you a good account of them in a ſhort time."

As the Colonel complained of his head, Frederic preſſed him to call at a ſurgeon's; which he at length complied with: but no outward wound appearing, quiet for a few days and a regular diet were declared the only requiſites.

When they had nearly reached Mrs. Moſely's, St. Auſtyn, looſing the Colonel's arm, ſaid, "My ſervices, if they merit that name, can no longer be uſeful; I therefore will wiſh you a good night, and will do myſelf the honour of ſending to inquire after your health to-

morrow,

morrow, and alſo to trouble you with a letter to Gertrude."

"I deſire," replied the Colonel, "that inſtead of doing yourſelf the honour to ſend after me, you will do me the honour to call yourſelf; your letters appear ſuch uncertain things, that, unleſs you deliver them into my own hand, I will not anſwer for their ſafety."

"I would willingly avail myſelf of your invitation," ſaid Frederic, "but—"

"But me no buts," interrupted the Colonel; "I am reſolved to be your friend, and inſiſt on being treated as ſuch."

St. Auſtyn bowed. "I accept the offer with thanks," ſaid he; "and to ſhew you that my candour at leaſt merits the diſtinction, confeſs, that as neceſſity has made me relinquiſh all thoughts of Miſs Montgomery for ever, I will not court the pain even a tranſitory ſight of her would occaſion. May ſhe be happy! while I——"

"Pſhaw, pſhaw!" interrupted the Colonel,

lonel, ſhe ſhall know nothing of the matter until we get into the country. I'll ſend Dame Moſely and her upon ſome errand or other, that ſhall detain them from eleven till two; ſo I deſire you will come in the interim."

St. Auſtyn, thus preſſed, promiſed; and, having ſeen the veteran enter, walked to his town-houſe, the time for which it had been engaged wanting yet a fortnight of being expired.

CHAPTER XX.

SELF-ACCUSATION—AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THE confuſion of Frederic's mind was too great to be immediately arranged; and on his arrival at home, throwing himſelf into a chair, he remained a conſiderable time loſt in the reflection of what had paſſed. At length ſtarting up, and pacing the apartment with haſty ſteps, he exclaimed, "Oh! Berners, into what an abyſs haſt thou plunged me! Yet why do I accuſe Berners? Did not nature beſtow on me a portion of reaſon ſufficient to render me an agent for myſelf? Berners acted according to his natural

tural propenſities, why did I not do the ſame? I had then been happy. As it is, I merit all I ſuffer; I have erred againſt reaſon and conſcience, and am—what I have made myſelf."

After a conſiderable pauſe he continued, "How could I for even a moment ſuppoſe her guilty? when every look, action, and word, proclaimed that hers was not a heart to be purchaſed. Her brother too! let me ſhrink from the compariſon—he is truly a man of honour, while I——"

A loud rap at the ſtreet-door broke on his reflections, and a moment after Berners entered, for he had not as yet quitted St. Auſtyn's, and, ſurpriſed to ſee Frederic, exclaimed:

"Angels, and miniſters of grace, defend us!
Be thou a ſpirit of health, or goblin damned,
Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,
Thou com'ſt in ſuch a queſtionable ſhape
That I will ſpeak to thee——"

"I cannot boaſt," returned St. Auſtyn, receiving Berners' offered hand, "of

being a ſpirit of peace: but my *intents* are certainly charitable; for I had the good fortune to render a trifling ſervice to an old gentleman who was thrown from his horſe, and requeſted me to accompany him to town, or I ſhould not have ſeen you this evening."

"Do you call that charitable?" ſaid Berners. "If he be affluent, 'tis ten to one if his heirs be of the ſame opinion. By the way, I was in hopes your fit of the ſpleen were paſt, and that you were come to join me."

St. Auſtyn waved the diſcourſe (for he had no inclination to enter into particulars), and aſked Berners queſtions reſpecting his new profeſſion; all which being reſolved, he pleaded fatigue, and retired to his apartment.

Strange as the paradox may appear, his heart was at once relieved, and its oppreſſion increaſed. He had heard from undeniable evidence, that Mrs. Stanhope and his ſiſter yet loved him. Marian too was cleared of the opprobrium

brium that had almoſt driven him to diſtraction; yet to counter-balance thoſe advantages, he conſidered his fortune (at leaſt for a conſiderable time) totally involved; if that had not been the caſe, what might he not have hoped, in his preſent frame of mind, from Mrs. Stanhope's kindneſs and the Colonel's friendſhip? But, as it was, the bar between Marian and himſelf appeared more inſuperable than ever. A thought croſſed his mind for a moment, of throwing himſelf on Mrs. Stanhope's affection, to whom he knew his difficulties in money tranſactions would be accounted as trifles; but the idea was baniſhed as ſoon as formed. "Periſh the thought!" ſaid he, "and ſooner myſelf than have recourſe to her generoſity! If I have expended my fortune like a fool, at leaſt let me endeavour to bear the reverſe like a man." With theſe thoughts he retired to bed, but the occurrences of the evening prevented ſleep. Yet it was not the reſtleſs anxiety that had before poſſeſſed him; a gleam

of ſelf-ſatisfaction ſweetened its bitterneſs, he was more content with himſelf. Though his fortune was involved, his debts were paid. That his obligations to Berners, as he ſuppoſed them, were in ſome meaſure acknowledged, likewiſe gave him pleaſure; and though he had no longer money for riot and diſſipation, yet he ſhould have enough for peace and retirement. In ſhort, no ſacrifice he had made would have coſt him a ſigh, had not the remembrance of Marian mingled with it. But ſtrengthening his mind with every conſideration he could deviſe, he at length fell aſleep.

Riſing at an early hour, he had breakfaſted, written to Gertrude, and was gone out, before Berners left his apartment; but as he was as yet too early for his appointment with the Colonel, he walked until paſt eleven, when with an agitated mind he took the way to Duke-ſtreet.

On entering the houſe, the Colonel's ſervant informed him that his maſter was

not

not up, being confined from the head-ache, but had desired, if he called, that he would have the goodness to wait. Frederic acquiesced, and was shewn into a parlour, where he had been seated but a few minutes when the door opened, and Miss Southern entered, being unapprised any one was there. The surprise was mutual; but St. Austyn rising said, "Miss Southern, I rejoice to see you; frequently have I thought of you, but could learn no tidings where you were retired since your mother's death. That unhappy event I was informed of when I called at Knightsbridge one morning to pay my compliments to her. Perhaps," said he smiling, "you are married, and have forgotten, or not thought fit, to claim the promise I made on leaving your house?"

"Ah Sir," replied Betsey, bursting into tears, "I shall never forget it, though I shall never claim it. My obligations to you I sensibly feel. You saw my danger, and wished to warn me of

it: but I was not to be ſo fortunate; I was doomed to plunge myſelf in guilt, ſhame, and ſorrow, and my mother into an untimely grave."

St. Auſtyn looked aſtoniſhed; a ſuſpicion that Berners might have ſeduced her intruded on his mind; and approaching her he ſaid, "My dear Miſs Southern, pardon me; indeed I ſincerely wiſh you well. Surely my friend Berners—"

"Ah, Sir," interrupted ſhe, "do not call ſuch a villain your friend; friendſhip cannot ſubſiſt between ſuch contrary characters; you I know are generous and humane, and would if poſſible have ſaved me. I am almoſt convinced you left my mother's houſe on purpoſe to break off the correſpondence between Mr. Berners and me; but it was unavailing, he was too complete a libertine to let me eſcape."

"You ſpeak with an acrimony that in no other caſe could be excuſed," returned Frederic; "the injury is great, and not to be compenſated; yet in regard

to

to pecuniary matters I will take care he ſhall do you juſtice."

"Do me juſtice!" ſaid Betſey: "'Tis not in his nature either to ſpeak truth, or do juſtice; ſooner would I periſh than receive any thing at his hands. If he is inclined to do juſtice, let him unſay all he has ſaid of your lovely ſiſter; let him confeſs the forgery he ſhewed me; let him—"

"Merciful Heaven! Miſs Southern, let me entreat you to have patience. Your wrongs may indeed be great, but do not let them make *you* loſe ſight of truth and juſtice."

"Ah!" ſaid ſhe, "I deſerve to be diſbelieved; but have you not ſeen Miſs St. Auſtyn? has ſhe not told you?"

"Told me what?" ſaid Frederic.

"What I related to her, when ſhe was unknown to me. Ah, Sir, I only conſidered her as one of the preſervers of my life."

Frederic's curioſity was now completely raiſed, and by queſtions he ob-

tained an unconnected account of all that had paſſed, Betſey never ſuſpecting that the brother of Miſs St. Auſtyn could be included in the prohibition ſhe had received from Montgomery.

The aſtoniſhment of Frederic ſurpaſſed deſcription: he was almoſt ready to diſbelieve the evidence of his ſenſes; but, with all the compoſure he could aſſume, turning to her, he ſaid, "I congratulate you on being placed where you will be out of the reach of temptation. This firſt error, my dear Miſs Southern, may be obliterated; but let it render you cautious. If I can ſerve you either with my intereſt or purſe, command them freely; but let me entreat that the whole affair be buried in oblivion. As Berners has been ſo many years my friend, I could wiſh the buſineſs ſettled without noiſe. I have ſeen neither my ſiſter nor aunt, nor yet heard from them ſince the period you mention, and the Colonel I am apt to think knows nothing of the buſineſs."

"He only knows my unhappy attempt; the goodneſs of Mr. Montgomery concealed my ſhame; he thinks that diſtreſs was my only motive."

"Shall I then entreat," ſaid Frederic, "that what has paſſed this morning may remain unnoticed? It can anſwer no purpoſe to ſay you have diſcloſed it to me."

"Ah, Sir, if Miſs Montgomery aſks me, I will not deceive her."

"By no means: but, ſhould ſhe not, favour me by remaining ſilent. The Colonel will not even mention to his niece my being here until they return to the country; you are then at liberty."

Betſey had hardly acquieſced and left the room, when the Colonel's ſervant entered to let him know that his maſter was dreſſed, and entreated his preſence in the drawing-room.

Miſs Southern in the mean time was revolving what had paſſed; ſhe was too little acquainted with the world to foreſee what might be expected from the

diſcloſure ſhe had made; but both Montgomery and St. Auſtyn having deſired her ſilence, ſhe concluded they had their particular motives, though without curioſity to pry into them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ACTIONS OF GAY MEN WILL NOT ALWAYS BEAR RECAPITULATION.

THE converſation between the Colonel and St. Auſtyn was far more conſtrained, on the part of the latter, than the evening before; Berners alone employed all his thoughts, nor yet could he ſcarcely believe what he had heard. Miſs Southern's injuries might lead her to exaggerate; but as to the written promiſe, if any ſuch thing exiſted, he could not conceive it forged; nay, a number of till then unnoticed circumſtances aroſe in his memory, nor among them did he forget Berners' conduct when he learned, at Mrs. St. Auſtyn's death, the ſettlement of Gertrude's fortune. In ſhort, his abſence aſtoniſhed the veteran; but attributing

attributing it to a different cauſe, he endeavoured all he could to raiſe his ſpirits, in the expectation of being reconciled to his family, as the whole of Frederic's behaviour convinced him that he earneſtly wiſhed it.

"And pray how the plague came *Fine Bones*," at length ſaid he, "to think of the army? I do not like it to be diſgraced by ſuch fellows."

"I do not apprehend that he is a coward," replied St. Auſtyn, not noticeing the epithet the Colonel had uſed.

"Perhaps not," ſaid he; "he appears hot-headed, but that is eſſentially different from courage. However, at all events, as he is a handſome fellow, 'tis ten to one but a red coat may be of ſervice among the ladies; but I do not like ſuch a character to have the command of honeſt veterans, who have ſpent their youth and ſtrength in the ſervice of their country."

Frederic then gave the Colonel a letter for Gertrude, which he promiſed to deliver

ver into her own hand;—"though, by the way," ſaid he, "I believe I ſhall protract my departure a day longer than I ſaid laſt night, for my head, though not bad enough to complain of, is yet ſomewhat troubleſome. Marian, however, merely thinks it the head-ache; but on our reaching home I ſhall confeſs the whole."

"If you do not go to-morrow, I may perhaps trouble you with a few lines more," ſaid Frederic.

"Well, do ſo; I will diſpoſe of the women as I have done this morning."

"Indeed," ſaid Frederic, "I cannot think of debarring you of ſo much more pleaſant company."

"A truce with your compliment," replied the Colonel, "I earneſtly wiſh to ſee you in friendſhip with your aunt, and would ſtrain almoſt any point to accompliſh my purpoſe. Your ſeparation from Berners will be a gigantic ſtep, and indeed the only efficacious one towards regaining her entire confidence."

St. Auſtyn

St. Auſtyn having delivered his letter was impatient to be gone, and, as ſoon as politeneſs would permit, left the Colonel; who however inſiſted on his calling the enſuing morning; which Frederic at length promiſed, unleſs ſomething very material prevented it.

Berners was out on Frederic's return home; nor was he diſpleaſed to find him ſo, as he truly judged that the moment of paſſion was an improper one to enter into explanations of the paſt. That Berners was a libertine, a gameſter, and in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the word a free liver, he well knew; but that with premeditated duplicity he ſhould endeavour to entangle the inexperienced Gertrude, appeared ſuch a ſtretch of unpardonable villainy as at once ſtruck at the root of friendſhip. As there was no probability of Berners coming home till late, St. Auſtyn ſent his ſervant to ſeveral places where he was likely to be met with, but in vain; and towards evening, finding it unavail-

unavailing to wait, he called on his ſolicitor, and, having tranſacted ſome buſineſs, returned at an early hour.

Berners in the mean time had heard of St. Auſtyn's inquiries for him, and, far from ſuſpecting the cauſe, haſtened home.

On his entrance Frederic gave him no time to ſpeak; for, ſtarting from his ſeat, he exclaimed, "Berners, I am rejoiced you are come; my impatience has been beyond all bounds; either you have been groſsly miſrepreſented to me, or I am at once the greateſt dupe and the moſt ill-uſed man on earth."

Berners was taken unawares; and though bluſhes had long been ſtrangers to his cheeks, yet his conſcience was not ſo completely ſeared but a crimſon hue dyed his face.

"Miſrepreſented!" repeated he, after a momentary pauſe; "pray who may it be that takes ſuch liberties with me? The obligation ſhall not go unrequited."

"Anger," replied Frederie, "in this caſe

St. Auſtyn having delivered his letter was impatient to be gone, and, as ſoon as politeneſs would permit, left the Colonel; who however inſiſted on his calling the enſuing morning; which Frederic at length promiſed, unleſs ſomething very material prevented it.

Berners was out on Frederic's return home; nor was he diſpleaſed to find him ſo, as he truly judged that the moment of paſſion was an improper one to enter into explanations of the paſt. That Berners was a libertine, a gameſter, and in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the word a free liver, he well knew; but that with premeditated duplicity he ſhould endeavour to entangle the inexperienced Gertrude, appeared ſuch a ſtretch of unpardonable villainy as at once ſtruck at the root of friendſhip. As there was no probability of Berners coming home till late, St. Auſtyn ſent his ſervant to ſeveral places where he was likely to be met with, but in vain; and towards evening, finding it unavail-

unavailing to wait, he called on his ſolicitor, and, having tranſacted ſome buſineſs, returned at an early hour.

Berners in the mean time had heard of St. Auſtyn's inquiries for him, and, far from ſuſpecting the cauſe, haſtened home.

On his entrance Frederic gave him no time to ſpeak; for, ſtarting from his ſeat, he exclaimed, "Berners, I am rejoiced you are come; my impatience has been beyond all bounds; either you have been groſsly miſrepreſented to me, or I am at once the greateſt dupe and the moſt ill-uſed man on earth."

Berners was taken unawares; and though bluſhes had long been ſtrangers to his cheeks, yet his conſcience was not ſo completely ſeared but a crimſon hue dyed his face.

"Miſrepreſented!" repeated he, after a momentary pauſe; "pray who may it be that takes ſuch liberties with me? The obligation ſhall not go unrequited."

"Anger," replied Frederie, "in this caſe

caſe will be of no avail; my informer is a woman—Betſey Southern!" As he ſpoke, he fixed his eyes ſtrongly on Berners, who involuntarily gave a ſtart.

"Betſey Southern?" ſaid he. "That ſurely is impoſſible; ſhe it *could* not be; I have undeniable reaſons to ſuppoſe her dead."

"You were at leaſt private in that circumſtance," returned Frederic; "for I believe you have frequently replied to my inquiries reſpecting her, that you were ignorant of her ſituation."

"I might not chooſe to reply to queſtions that did not immediately concern you," returned Berners warmly, "nor do I now. If I liked the girl, and that liking was returned, what concern have you, or any one, in the buſineſs?"

"No concern but that which every one who bears a human form ought to feel at the ſeduction of an unſuſpecting, unprotected female. *My* buſineſs, indeed, is to me of a nearer nature; and as a man, and as you value your honour, I charge you anſwer

anſwer it. You will obſerve, Berners, I am calm; be therefore equally ſo. I confeſs, though I think I have ſtrong preſumptive proof, yet I unwillingly believe it. Have you, or have you not, received any promiſe of marriage from Gertrude?"

"Suppoſing that information juſt," ſaid Berners, "what injury have you ſuſtained from it?"

"What injury? Is it poſſible you can aſk that queſtion? To perſuade a young inexperienced girl to take a ſtep of ſuch conſequence without the knowledge of her neareſt relations—does that anſwer *your* idea of honour, or *your* ſentiments of friendſhip to conceal it from me? Gertrude at the age of ſeventeen, however unpardonable, was unequal to the art of a libertine of twenty-nine. It however can now, thanks to my mother's will, be of no avail; you will therefore favour me by relinquiſhing it."

"Never," replied Berners. "Though the power of Mrs. Stanhope may force her

her to falſify thoſe promiſes, yet I will preſerve that pledge at leaſt of her affection."

"To ſhew to the next victim you mean to ſeduce, as an engagement you cannot break," exclaimed St. Auſtyn, loſing his temper——"At length the maſk is torn off, and I ſee you, as thoſe that knew the world better than myſelf, predicted. Could you ever dare to ſuppoſe, infatuated as I was, that I would willingly conſent to my ſiſter's eſpouſing the refuſe of half the proſtitutes in town? I might be fool enough to expend my fortune and injure my health in purſuits my calmer moments deſpiſed, but I never was ſcoundrel enough to conſent to the ruin of a ſiſter. There, Berners, you left my education unfiniſhed; that refinement on villainy was overlooked."

"This language ſhall be properly anſwered," ſaid Berners.

"Call me fool, dupe, idiot, and I will acknowledge all," returned Frederic; "be you equally juſt, and confeſs how

how truly you merit thoſe of knave, villain, deceiver, and hypocrite."

"Whatever I have done I dare juſtify," ſaid Berners; "I am ready to give you ſatisfaction this moment."

"Satisfaction?" repeated Frederic; "what ſatisfaction can be made for expoſing the folly of an inexperienced girl? What ſatisfaction can you make to the feelings of a man you have ſo groſsly injured under the deteſtable pretence of friendſhip? A ſhort time back, but for the levity of your character, I ſhould have gloried to call you brother, and I at leaſt owe Heaven thanks that you were not hypocrite enough to conceal it."

"Name your time and place for tomorrow," replied Berners.

"Primroſe Hill, at ſix. That ſpot has once witneſſed my diſhonour: tomorrow it ſhall ſee me puniſh a villain, or periſh in the attempt."

With thoſe words he quitted the apartment, leaving Berners in no very enviable ſtate of mind. In a few minutes

nutes after he desired the servant to call him a coach, and left the house.

Late as it was, Frederic went in pursuit of Captain Watson, who had before attended him in the meeting with Montgomery, and obtained his promise to accompany him, though greatly astonished when he learned that Berners was his adversary. Watson, though rather what the world calls a man of pleasure, was strictly a man of honour; he belonged to the same regiment in which St. Austyn had purchased for Berners, and, being brother to the agent, had learned some particulars respecting the business, that gave him a high opinion of Frederic. He therefore lost no time, when St. Austyn left him, but with a brother officer set off in quest of Berners, whom at length he found at a gaming-house he usually frequented late in the evening. Calling him out, he apprised him of what had passed, and of the promise he had given; but at the same time observed, that if he could set-

tle

tle the diſpute more amicably he ſhould be happy.

"I have very ſtrong reaſons to know your ſituation was procured by his intereſt," ſaid he; "which is a proof of uncommon friendſhip and generoſity in the preſent ſtate of his finances; for, ample as his fortune was, it is ſaid to be nearly ruined; I have heard a ſale is to take place of all his horſes and carriages. The quarrel he touched ſlightly upon, but enough to convince me that you have not acted in this caſe in a manner that any gentleman will countenance. You are young in the army, Mr. Berners; but, believe me, raiſing your arm againſt the man who has been ſincerely your friend will not enhance your character for courage, but rather give it a ſtigma of ingratitude, which will make you univerſally ſhunned."

"My obligations to St. Auſtyn are void, when he takes ſo much pains to publiſh them; nor will I be indebted to him for my ſituation," replied Berners.

"St.

"St. Auſtyn never mentioned them," anſwered he; "my information was obtained through my brother, who tranſacted the whole buſineſs; and as for your ſituation, I think with yourſelf, that obligation ought to be cancelled before you meet him."

"It is impoſſible to cancel it before the morning," returned Berners; "you will therefore excuſe my entering on the ſubject. I ſhall ſee you at ſix."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.